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SHAKESPEARE
THROUGH OXFORD GLASSES

BY
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"THAT EVERY WORD DOTH ALMOST TELL MY NAME"
—*Sonnets.*

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SHAKESPEARE THROUGH OXFORD GLASSES

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CHAPTER I

The Problem

This book, as the name implies, is flagrantly anti-Stratfordian, but even so, it is hoped that it will not outrage the susceptibilities of those who firmly believe that William Shakespeare of Stratford and no other, is or could be the author of the works of Shakespeare. Possession is nine points of the law, and after three hundred years it is obvious that very strong reasons must be adduced before the credit of the authorship is taken from one man and given to another. Even the most ardent Stratfordian may, however, come to the conclusion that the Earl of Oxford had some very intimate connection with the works of Shakespeare.

In some quarters there has been a tendency to belittle Shakespeare's ability in order to strengthen the claim of a rival candidate. Here this is far from being the case as such a hypothesis is entirely unnecessary. The problem to be solved is whether the Earl of Oxford did or did not write the plays, and William Shakespeare's ability or inability does not help to a solution in the smallest degree.

Although, in the course of writing about the various plays, it has been found simpler to write as if the

Earl of Oxford was undoubtedly the author, it is not intended to state this as a fact—indeed, it would be a very rash thing to do before public opinion has been given on the subject. What is desired is to draw attention to certain curious facts, and to leave the reader to form an opinion whether they are illusions, coincidences or definite allusions to the Earl of Oxford. If the last, then the problem to be solved is, " Why are there all these allusions to the Earl of Oxford ? "

The wonderful researches (at this stage the word " discoveries " must not be used) made by Mr. E. Thomas Looney and published in " Shakespeare Identified," raise most interesting points from a topical point of view, and it is from a topical point of view only and not a literary one that the subject is now being studied. The great point of interest lies in two facts ; firstly, that the Earl of Oxford was born in 1550, fourteen years before William Shakespeare, and secondly, that he died in 1604, about ten years before the works are commonly supposed to have been completed. Fourteen years is a long time when plays contain topical references, and that this is so appears to be a generally accepted fact. Civil wars in France, earthquakes and eclipses are all pointed to for fixing the dates of certain plays, while other sentences are pointed to as allusions to Shakespeare's personal affairs. If the Earl of Oxford be the author of the plays it is certainly natural to suppose that he started writing them before he was forty years of age. The plays are usually credited as dating from about 1589 ; if therefore the Earl of Oxford be the writer, and topical events are alluded to, they will be events of much earlier date than are usually looked for. This does prove to be the case, if the allusions pointed out in the forthcoming chapters are real ; for they will show that eleven or twelve plays were actually written before 1589. References to topical events are of various

natures: historical; meteorological, such as eclipses, earthquakes, heavy snow; calendar, such as leap years, new moons, days of the week when saints' days fall; and uses of special words, such as "metamorphosis," "excellency," "century." These allusions will show that the plays were commenced in 1574 (when Shakespeare was only ten years of age) and continued practically continuously for thirty years, and that with six exceptions they were completed, or nearly completed, by 1604, the date of the Earl of Oxford's death. The exceptions are such doubtful plays as "Pericles," "Titus Andronicus," "Timon of Athens," 1st and 2nd parts of "Henry VI" and "Henry VIII." Having placed the plays chronologically by topical events, evidence will then be shown of continual personal allusions to the Earl of Oxford himself, incidents of his life, punning allusions to names, birthdays of his family and references to his own age. Whenever an age of any importance is referred to it will be found (with three exceptions) to coincide with the Earl of Oxford's age at the time of writing the play (as discovered by topical events). Two of the three exceptions will be found to refer to ages of his relatives, the other, so far as the author of this book is concerned, being a mystery.

None of these allusions are in any way of a startling nature and, taking them singly, they could undoubtedly be illusions or mere coincidences. It is the quantity rather than the quality which makes them so extraordinary. In thirty plays there appear to be about 150 references which either point to the dates of the plays being quite different from those ordinarily accepted, or which point to incidents connected with the Earl of Oxford's life.

It is necessary to make some remarks as to how they occur. It must not be assumed that any character in the plays is suggested to be any historical

personage throughout. What is suggested is, that when the author wishes to make some topical or personal remark, he puts it into the mouth of a character most suitable to the action of the play. Consequently it sometimes occurs that references to two or more historical personages are to be found in the sayings of one character and vice versa.

In studying the subject from a topical point of view the only books that have been read are Knight's and the Irving " Shakespeare." Nothing is known as to how many of the allusions are new, or how many are ancient history to Shakespearean students. An apology is offered if many well-known facts are treated as personal discoveries. It is also probable that in suggesting a solution some very big blunders will be made. It is realised that continual study " through Oxford glasses " tends to convert illusions into allusions, and it needs an open mind to form a judgment.

Before making any more remarks of a general nature a chapter must be devoted to a biography of the Earl of Oxford. Almost every known incident in his life appears to be referred to in the works of Shakespeare, and before studying the individual plays it is also necessary to have some idea of his circumstances at the time of writing each of them.

CHAPTER II

A Biography

Edward Vere—or Ver as it was sometimes spelt—Viscount Bolebec, 17th Earl of Oxford and Lord Great Chamberlain of England, was born on April 2nd, 1550. His mother was the sister of Arthur Golding, the translator of Ovid's "Metamorphoses," and she was the second wife of the 16th Earl. He had one sister, Mary, who married Peregrine Bertie—the brave Lord Willoughby—and a half-sister, Katherine, a daughter by his father's first marriage. His paternal grandmother was Elizabeth Trussell. The 16th Earl died when Edward was between twelve and thirteen years of age, and the boy thus became a Royal Ward under the charge of Sir William Cecil (Lord Burghley). His mother very shortly afterwards married a second time. The young Earl appears to have been of an impulsive and headstrong nature and was probably always a thorn in the flesh of his guardian. While under the charge of Lord Burghley he would become intimately acquainted with Anne Cecil—afterwards to be his wife—and also with that witty lady, Mary, daughter of Sir Henry Sidney, for, in 1569, when Sir Henry Sidney was in Ireland, Mary appears to have been living with the Cecils. In August, 1571, he became engaged to Anne, an engagement which caused much sorrow amongst the younger ladies of the Court. Anne was fourteen years of age at the time and an attempt had been previously made to arrange a marriage between her and Sir Philip Sidney, which

arrangement fell through. Her marriage with the Earl appears to have been one of convenance and it turned out very unhappily. The young couple were married in the same year on some date between December 12th and 16th. At this time there was trouble between Queen Elizabeth and the Spanish Ambassador, which ended in the latter's removal from the Court of Saint James. The Earl of Oxford was of known Roman Catholic tendencies, and his marriage into a Protestant family was an additional source of irritation to the Spanish Ambassador. It is from his letter to the King of Spain that the date of the Earl's wedding can be approximately fixed. Queen Elizabeth attended the wedding, coming up from Greenwich on December 12th. Almost immediately after the marriage came the first passage of arms between the Earl and Lord Burghley. The Duke of Norfolk, who was a cousin of the Earl, was tried for and convicted of treason in January, 1572, and Oxford tried to induce his father-in-law to use his influence to get his relative pardoned, but without success. The story went that the Earl of Oxford thereupon threatened in revenge to ruin his wife's life, and to that end set about dissipating his estates. The Earl at this time evinced a strong desire to travel, and it is more likely that the selling of his lands was to obtain money for this purpose. He made many attempts to get away from Court, but being a great favourite with Queen Elizabeth she was not inclined to let him go. At last he took French leave and went over to Flanders in the autumn or late summer of 1574, but his freedom was short lived, the Queen sending over to have him brought back. On his return he did, however, succeed in obtaining permission to travel and proceeded first to Paris. The evidence shows that he must have started about December, and he returned in April, 1576, after about sixteen months' travelling, during which time he visited

Florence, Siena, Padua, Milan and Venice, remaining for some considerable time in the neighbourhood of the latter. Someone of the name of Paretti appears to have been his travelling companion, who used to write home to Lord Burghley accounts of his movements. On his voyage home after again visiting Paris he was misused by Flemish pirates, an action which aroused Lord Burghley's indignation, and over which there was much correspondence. While in Paris he heard news about his wife which caused a complete estrangement and on his return he refused to hold any communication with her. During his absence a daughter, Elizabeth, was born on July 2nd, 1575, and, according to Lord Burghley, he considered questioning her parentage. Lord Burghley expresses surprise at this proposed action as he had not done so before his departure abroad, when his wife had told him of suspicions that a domestic event was impending, nor again in March when he was informed in Paris of the certainty of the suspicion. His visit abroad is most well known for the fact that he was the first person to introduce scented gloves into England, presenting a pair to Her Majesty, who had her portrait painted in them. After his return from abroad he appears to have settled down once more to a Court life, but without the companionship of his wife, who is sympathetically referred to as the "lonely little countess." Again he tried to get away, and volunteered to go with Frobisher's third expedition to Meta Incognita, which left Harwich in 1578 (former expeditions had been undertaken in 1576 and 1577). His request presumably was refused, for he does not appear to have gone on this expedition. The Earl of Oxford has come down to history as one of the best of the courtier poets of the early part of Queen Elizabeth's reign, so it is probable that about this ime he was writing his poems which have been

collected and published by the author of " Shakespeare Identified," and which are usually written under the initials " E. O." He is also known as one of the best writers of comedy, although none of his plays have survived, and he was patron of a company of actors known as " The Oxford Boys." He did not, however, confine himself to the drama, but excelled in tilting and horsemanship, winning prizes at tournaments on many occasions. Shortly after Christmas in 1577 his sister Mary married Peregrine Bertie, in spite of opposition on the part of both families. The Earl at this time was a prime favourite at Court. Sir Christopher Hatton in a letter expresses his jealousy of him, and in a letter (by some supposed to be a forgery) Mary Queen of Scots accuses Queen Elizabeth of keeping him from his wife. In 1579 his headstrong and haughty disposition began once more to get him into trouble. The poetical rivalry between him and Sir Philip Sidney is fully described in " Shakespeare Identified," but in addition he was a strong political opponent. The Earl of Oxford was of the party which favoured the Alençon marriage, although he roundly refused in 1578 to dance for the benefit of the French Ambassadors, and when in 1579 the Duke Alençon visited Queen Elizabeth, the Earl was one of those proposed as hostages for his safety. Sir Philip Sidney was of the opposite party, and it was therefore probably due in part to this political antagonism that, in the summer of this year, occurred the famous quarrel on the tennis court. The Earl arrived on the court, where Sir Philip was already playing, and requested (or perhaps ordered) Sir Philip to remove himself, which he refused to do. Following the quarrel came a challenge by Sir Philip to a duel, which the Queen refused to sanction. Philip Sidney retired from Court in dudgeon to Penshurst, the home of his sister, now Countess of Pembroke, where he

proceeded to write a metrical version of the Psalms. The Earl remained at Court, but late in 1580 or in 1581 more trouble arose and the Earl was sent to the Tower. It is difficult to find out the exact cause; one writer states the reason to be of a similar nature (only more so) to that which later sent Sir Walter Raleigh, and later again, the Earl of Southampton, into durance vile. The authority for this statement has not been found. So far as could be ascertained there were accusations and counter-accusations, by the Earl of Oxford on the one side, and on the other by Lord Henry Howard and Charles Arundel, of complicity with Roman Catholic plotters. Charles Arundel went further and accused the Earl of every known crime and vice, including the intended assassination of Sir Philip Sidney. This gentleman (together with one Charles Paget) was a spy in the pay of the King of Spain, so his statements may be valued accordingly. Whatever the cause may have been, the Earl did go to the Tower and was released on June 9th, 1581. On his release it was stated that he had not been committed on any criminal cause or on any cause of treason (Acts of the Privy Council). Although released he was not given his absolute freedom. The Queen stated that she would not restore him to full liberty until he had been confronted with Lord Henry Howard and Charles Arundel, and also until he had been "dealt withal for his wife," so it appears that his conduct to her had also something to do with it. The Earl remained in disfavour until June, 1583, when Her Majesty forgave him. By this time the quarrel with his wife must have been patched up, for a son was born in May, 1583, who died at birth. Meanwhile his theatrical company had been touring in the provinces, and is heard of at Cambridge and Ipswich. On April 6th, 1584, his daughter Bridget was born. In March, 1585, when it was rumoured

that the King of Scotland was coming to England, the Earl is again suggested as a hostage, but this visit apparently never took place, and in August of that year Oxford proceeded to the Netherlands. The Dutch had asked that a nobleman of quality should be sent as the Queen's representative, and the Earl of Leicester was nominated, the Earl of Oxford going first until the Earl of Leicester took his place. He returned at the end of October and in February, 1586, sat on the trial of Mary Queen of Scots. There were six peers who voted for her acquittal, but history does not apparently relate their names. His daughter Susan was born on May 26th, 1587, and a daughter Frances died about September 12th of the same year and was buried at Edmonton where presumably the Earl was then living. When this mysterious lady was born has, unfortunately, not been discovered, as her birth might be of some assistance in the problem of the plays. On June 6th, 1588, his wife died. She had an unhappy married life and apparently entirely without cause. We now come to the time of the Spanish Armada. The Earl fitted out a ship at his own expense and was himself at sea, though in what capacity, whether in command or not, is not stated. It is probable that he was with Lord Henry Seymour's squadron. This squadron was present at the Battle of Gravelines, but was withdrawn from the chase north and sent back by order of Lord Howard of Effingham to protect the coast in case of an invasion from the Netherlands. The squadron arrived at Harwich on August 1st, and on that day the Earl of Oxford was offered the Governorship of Harwich, which post, however, he refused. In the following year he sat on the trial of the Earl of Arundel. In 1591 he married Elizabeth Trentham, a maid of honour to the Queen. The precise date is not known, but on July 4th of that year he sold a house to Francis Trentham—a brother

of Elizabeth—to be disposed of to the advantage of Elizabeth. It is likely therefore that this was in the nature of a marriage settlement and that the marriage took place about that time. From this time onwards there is almost a complete blank as regards his life, and he appears to have left Court for good. Knowing Queen Elizabeth's way of treating her favourites, when they married without her permission, as witness Leicester, Raleigh, Southampton, and the two unfortunate sisters Grey, besides many more, it is not difficult to conjecture what caused him to retire from Court. A son, Henry, was born on February 24th, 1593, this being the only child of the marriage. In 1595 his daughter Elizabeth married William Stanley, Earl of Derby. Oxford sat on the trial of the Earls of Essex and Southampton in 1602, and died June 25th, 1604, the year after James I came to the throne.

This completes his biography ; only those incidents in his life which it is claimed are referred to in the works of Shakespeare (with the exception, of course, of his death) have been mentioned, and these will necessarily have to be repeated as the individual plays are discussed.

One word as to his character. Historically he appears to have created a good impression in Paris and Venice. He was also a favourite with the maids of honour at the Court of Queen Elizabeth. That he was kindly to his social inferiors can be gleaned from the charming letter he wrote to Mr. Francis Bedingfield when publishing the latter's poems. This letter is published in " The Poems of the Earl of Oxford," by Mr. E. Thomas Looney. Otherwise his character can only be discovered by the writings of men who were mostly political rivals.

The writer's impression of his character is formed entirely from the works of Shakespeare as read " through Oxford glasses " and is as follows :

In his youth a mixture of Bertram, Biron and Benedick; in his middle age a mixture of Duke Orsino, Bassanio and the melancholy Jacques; and in his later years, of the Duke of Kent (in "King Lear") Menenius Agrippa (in "Coriolanus") and Mark Antony, but principally the two latter.

CHAPTER III

Chronology of the Plays

Having given a general view of the problem, and a short account of the Earl of Oxford's life, we can now turn to the chronology of the plays which is set down in the annexed table. Before taking the plays individually it will be well to take a general survey, firstly from a Shakespearean point of view, and then from an Oxonian one. (*See* page 24.)

It is necessary once more to emphasise the fact that the chronology of the plays is made out from topical allusions. It has not been influenced by the Shakespearean order of the plays in the slightest degree. Had, for example, topical events pointed to "King Lear" being written in 1578 instead of 1598, it would have been placed there, although the style of the writing points to it being obviously one of the latest works. The only plays for which there are no topical allusions fixing the dates of the plays are "Richard III," "Merry Wives of Windsor," two parts of "Henry IV," "Antony and Cleopatra," and "The Tempest." Six plays in all. These have been placed not by topical allusions but by their fitness with regard to the other plays.

Let us now study the plays from a Shakespearean point of view. Knowledge as to the order of the plays appear to be of a very vague nature, but there is a tendency to divide the time of writing them into three periods—early, middle, and late. Now let the Oxford period be divided in a similar manner—

Early period—1574 to 1584.
Middle period—1587 to 1597.
Late period—1598 to his death.

It will be found that in the early period in both cases "Love's Labour's Lost," "Comedy of Errors," "Two Gentlemen of Verona," and the first sketch of "Hamlet" appear. In the middle period "Twelfth Night," "Richard II," "Midsummer Night's Dream," "As You Like It," 1st and 2nd parts of "Henry IV," "Henry V," and "The Merchant of Venice." In the late period, "King Lear," "Measure for Measure," "Macbeth," "Antony and Cleopatra," "Coriolanus," "Cymbeline," "Julius Cæsar," and "The Tempest."

Twenty plays out of thirty-one are placed as being written in such order as not to violate to any great extent the usually accepted theory.

It is imagined that the plays which will appear to be placed in the most startling manner are "Much Ado about Nothing," "The Winter's Tale" and "Othello."

Studying the plays as a whole from an Oxonian point of view it will be found that up to 1587 the setting of seven of the ten plays is at Court. The three exceptions are "Comedy of Errors," "The Taming of the Shrew" and "Troilus and Cressida." The last was written during the time when the Earl of Oxford was out of favour at Court and as regards "The Taming of the Shrew," it is believed that its original setting was a Court one and that in the original, Baptista, instead of being a rich gentleman, was a Duke.

It is suggested that up to 1587 these plays were written for acting at Court and that therefore the setting was such as would interest courtiers and be suitable for topical allusions. After either the death of the Earl's first wife or after his second marriage, the plays were no longer written for Court but for public acting. With the exception of "As You Like It" none

of the plays, not founded on history, have, from this time onwards, a Court setting. For this reason it was thought that "As You Like It" might have been written in either 1585, 1586 or 1588, the three years for which no plays have been found, and every effort has been made to find topical allusions for one of these dates even though it necessitated considering an early and a revised version. No success, however, followed this effort.

It will be noticed also that the historical plays, the early British plays and the Roman plays all occur as individual series reasonably during the same period.

If "Cymbeline's" date had been 1600 it would have fitted this point slightly better than it does.

It will be noticed that no plays are written in 1585 and 1586: why this was so is not known, but it is interesting to note that in "Shakespeare Identified," Mr. Looney draws attention to Spenser's "Tears of the Muses" and the allusion to Willy "sitting in idle cell," whom he identifies as the Earl of Oxford. Spenser came to London from Ireland in 1589 and in an essay on his poem it is stated that "The Tears of the Muses" by its general tone is shown to have been written before he left Ireland or even at an earlier date. Should it have been written in 1587 the silence it complains about would just fit this two-year blank.

It is not the object of this book to deal with anything other than practical topical allusions, but it is thought that a study of the whole of "The Tears of the Muses" will be found to be very interesting to the reader from an Oxford point of view.

Each play will now be treated individually and in chronological order.

CHRONOLOGY OF THE PLAYS

1574. Love's Labour's Lost.
1575. Comedy of Errors.
1576. Two Gentlemen of Verona.
1577. Possibly the missing play—Love's Labour's Won.
1578. Taming of the Shrew.
1579. All's Well that Ends Well.
1580. Much Ado about Nothing.
1581. Troilus and Cressida. } Eventually formed into
1582. Agamemnon and Ulysses. } one play.
1583. Hamlet.
1584. The Winter's Tale.
1585.
1586.
1587. Twelfth Night.
1588.
1589. Othello.
1590. King John.
1591. Richard II ; Romeo and Juliet.
1592. Third part Henry VI ; A Midsummer Night's Dream.
1593. Richard III.
1594. As You Like It.
1595. First part Henry IV.
1596. Second part Henry IV ; The Merchant of Venice.
1597. The Merry Wives of Windsor ; Henry V.
1598. King Lear.
1599. Macbeth ; Measure for Measure.
1600. Antony and Cleopatra ; Coriolanus.
1601. Cymbeline.
1602. Julius Cæsar.
1603. The Tempest.

CHAPTER IV

1574—1579 : Early Court Period

1574—*Love's Labour's Lost*

The first inkling as to the date of this play is to be found amongst the names of the characters themselves. The two leading personages are a King of Navarre and a Princess of France, and the action of the play is such as to make it safe to assume that the two eventually marry. Now a King of Navarre did marry a Princess of France in 1571. These were Henri III of Navarre (afterwards Henri IV of France) and Margaret of Valois. The latter was the daughter of Henri II of France, and at the time of her marriage her father was dead and her brother Charles was King. On this point, therefore, history and the play differ, for in the play the Princess was the daughter of the King of France, but a hint of this difference is given, or at any rate that she had a brother Charles, for in Act II, Scene 1, on a question as to whether the King of France had paid a certain debt the Princess says :

> " We arrest your word—
> Boyet, you can produce acquittances
> For such a sum, from special officers
> Of Charles his father."

The acquittances were required from the King, who is, therefore, Charles's father, making Charles brother to the Princess. So far as the action of the play is concerned there appears to be no reason either for giving her a brother Charles or for referring to him ; it is

therefore accepted as a topical allusion only, and fairly definitely shows who the Princess of France is intended to be.

Having placed the characters so far the date gets definitely fixed by the date of the death of the King of France. Charles IX, King of France, died in 1574, and in the last scene of the play we have as follows :—

(*Enter* MONSIEUR MERCADE, *a messenger.*)

MERCADE : God save you, Madam.

PRINCESS : Welcome, Mercade ;
But that thou interrupt'st our merriment.

MERCADE : I am sorry, Madam ; for the news I bring
Is heavy on my tongue. The king your father—

PRINCESS : Dead, for my life!

MERCADE : Even so : my tale is told.

It would appear as if the action of the play is altered by this unexpected death of the king ; in fact, that he died while the play was in the course of being written.

About 1574, the proposed marriage between Queen Elizabeth and Francis, Duc d'Alencon, was one of the interesting topics of the Court, and so when Armado says :—

" Sirrah Costard, I will enfranchise thee,"

and the clown answers :

" O, marry me to one Frances,"

the somewhat feeble joke would have at any rate some point in it.

The use of the word " Monarcho " has been explained as referring to a mad Italian who lived in England and thought himself Monarch of the world. It is not known when this individual lived, but it is understood that Thomas Churchyard, the poet, wrote an epitaph on him in 1580, so it is probable that he flourished in 1574.

The allusion to statute caps in Act V, Scene 2, should also be noticed. The date of the Statute from which the name arose was 1571. How long a time would elapse before the nickname would be adopted can only be a matter of conjecture.

The general plot of the play, namely the King making his courtiers forgo the society of women, might very well be intended as a skit on Queen Elizabeth's well-known objection to either her favourites or her maids of honour marrying.

No personal allusion to the Earl of Oxford (of the sort with which this book deals) have been found in the play.

The most important point is the fixing, by the death of the King of France, of the date as 1574, thus making a start on the plays when William Shakespeare, of Stratford, was only ten years of age.

1575—*The Comedy of Errors*

The principal event which fixed the date of "Love's Labour's Lost" is also connected with the placing of "The Comedy of Errors," for on the death of Charles IX of France and the accession of his brother Henry of Anjou, King of Poland, civil war broke out in France. This war is known as the Fifth Civil War and is referred to in Act III, Scene 2. France "armed and reverted, making war against her heir." In this case, however, there is a second clue of a more definite nature than was found in "Love's Labour's Lost." According to the "Records of Revels," a play entitled "The History of Errors" was acted at Court on New Year's Day, 1576, and it may be safely presumed that the two plays are one and the same. As a more general point, but interesting as not being the only occasion on which initials give a hint, it may be pointed out that in the play, *S*yracuse and *E*phesus are the

two countries which hold unfriendly relations with each other, and the embargo and reprisals are very similar to those at the time taking place between *S*pain and *E*ngland.

We now come to the first of the many age allusions —the age of the twins and the age of the Earl of Oxford. The latter was twenty-five years of age. The references to the age of the twins unfortunately are somewhat contradictory. The mother states that " thirty-three years have I but gone in travail of you, my sons." On the other hand the father says :

" My youngest boy, and yet my eldest care,
At eighteen years became inquisitive
After his brother ; and importuned me,
That his attendant might bear him company in quest of him."—(Act I, Scene 1.)

On meeting the other twin and taking him for his brother who he has not seen since his departure, he says :—

" O time's extremity !
Hast thou so cracked and splitted my poor tongue
In seven short years, that here my only son
Knows not my feeble key of untuned cares ? "—
(Act V, Scene 1.)

By his statement, therefore, the twins would be twenty-five years of age. The " seven years " is unlikely to be an error, for it is repeated—

" But seven years since, in Syracuse, boy.
Thou know'st we parted."

It is believed that Shakespearean commentators have accepted thirty-three as the error and twenty-five as correct, so the age of the twins as selected by the author is Oxford's own age.

1576—*Two Gentlemen of Verona*

In Act I, Scene 3, of this play Panthino remarks on Antonio keeping Proteus at home while others send their sons forth—

> " Some to the wars, to try their fortunes there;
> Some to discover islands far away."

This last line has been taken as referring to one of Sir Walter Raleigh's expeditions, and therefore we shall not be far wrong in using the same lines for fixing the date " through Oxford glasses."

In 1576 Martin Frobisher went on his first expedition to Meta Incognita (as it was called at the time) in an endeavour to find a north-west passage to Cathay. The expedition aroused great interest in Court and was mainly made possible by the help of the Earl of Warwick. There were expeditions again in 1577 and 1578, for the latter of which the Earl of Oxford volunteered, and there is also evidence that he helped to finance one or other of them. If the Earl wanted to go in 1578, he was probably interested in 1576, and the allusion, therefore, is a natural one though not very definite.

A further allusion which appears to fix the date is the use of the word " metamorphose." Omitting " Titus Andronicus " this is the only play in all the works of Shakespeare in which this long-winded word is used, and here it is used twice. It was, therefore, not a word in general use by the author, so some special reason may be looked for with propriety for it being used here. Arthur Golding, translator, was the Earl of Oxford's uncle, and, according to Morley's " English Literature," he published in 1575 the fifteen books of Ovidius Naso, entitled " Metamorphosis," and dedicated them to the Earl of Leicester. The use of

the word in 1576 would therefore have a certain amount of topical interest.

These are the only references which at all fix the date of the play. It is, however, eminently a Court play, and glancing at the names of the characters, Valentine will certainly be Vere, the surname of the Earl of Oxford. Proteus might be Thomas Perrott (or the name may possibly be taken from Paretti, who is referred to in the biography as having travelled with the Earl of Oxford in 1575). Eglamour may be Scudamore, and Thurio, Arthur Georges, who were both courtiers of the day. These are idle conjectures, not suggested as any proof of the authorship. The most interesting point is the resemblance of Valentine's travels to those of the Earl. When Valentine is asked by the outlaws how long he has been in Milan he replies, " Sixteen months," although the action of the play would make it considerably less time. This peculiarity as to length of time, it should be mentioned, has been drawn attention to by Shakespearean commentators. Sixteen months is the time the Earl of Oxford was absent from the English Court when he made his tour abroad—rather too extraordinary to be a mere coincidence. Valentine is captured by brigands on his departure from Milan, while Vere was misused by pirates on his way back to England.

No play has been discovered for 1577, but reference has been made to a play entitled " Love's Labour's Won " which no longer exists. Valentine, talking of love, says :

> " If haply won, perhaps a hapless gain ;
> If lost, why then a grievous labour won."

This may have suggested the title of the play, which may, therefore, have been written the following year, viz., 1577.

1578—*The Taming of the Shrew*

This play will, it is thought, prove to be quite interesting, and it is fairly full of Oxford allusions. First, as to its date. If the life of Dr. John Dee is studied, in the "Dictionary of National Biography" reference will be found to the excitement caused at Court by the appearance of a wonderful comet. This comet, which was certainly the largest in the time of Queen Elizabeth, appeared in October, 1577, and remained until January, 1578. When Petruchio appears at the church for his wedding, dressed in the extraordinary garb he selected, he says:

> "Gentles, methinks you frown;
> And wherefore gaze this goodly company,
> As if they saw some wondrous monument,
> Some comet, or unusual prodigy?"

The comet therefore has a topical significance, but there is also the wondrous monument to be explained. In olden days there used to be a tower on London Bridge. According to Stow the old tower was pulled down in 1577 and the first stone of a new tower was laid in August, 1577, the tower being completed in 1579, and described by Stow as a beautiful and chargeable piece of work. Its building would naturally arouse interest in London, and we thus get both the comet and the monument to which Petruchio refers in 1578. It is to be feared that in writing "The Taming of the Shrew" the Earl of Oxford is having a sly dig at his sister Mary, although he selected Katherine, the name of his half-sister, as the name of the shrew. Mary married Lord Willoughby shortly after Christmas, 1577 (*vide* Rutland manuscripts), and that she was no milk and water young lady is evident, for Sir Thomas Cecil, writing to his father on the subject of a visit to Mary by her mother-in-law, the Duchess

of Suffolk, says: "I think my Lady Mary will be beaten with that rod which heretofore she prepared for others." Her husband's name was Peregrine Bertie. Attention is drawn to Petruchio's remark in Act II, Scene 1—"O slow winged turtle, shall a buzzard take thee," a palpable allusion to a peregrine.

Bertie's age at the time of his marriage was twenty-two, and Petruchio's age is mentioned as being "thirty-two a pip out." This number is generally thought to refer to the game of thirty-one, the second figure being the one that is a pip out, but it is here suggested that it has a double meaning, and that according to the author's real meaning, it is the first figure three that is the pip out. "Thirty-two a pip out" is therefore twenty-two, and is a reference to Bertie's age.

So much for Lady Mary, but the Earl's own marriage and the incidents connected with it are not lost sight of.

In Elizabeth Strickland's "History of Queen Elizabeth" it is stated that the Court was enlivened by four weddings on December 22nd, 1571. Two of them are of no interest: that of the Earl of Oxford is the third, and the fourth wedding was that of Lord Paget to a rich young widow. It is presumed that some Court festivity on December 22nd to celebrate the four weddings is referred to, for the Earl of Oxford was certainly married a week or ten days earlier. The last scene of "The Taming of the Shrew" is such a function; true, there are only three weddings there, but one of them is that of Hortensio to a rich young widow.

We must now consider Christopher Sly, who, attempts will be made to show, is merely a caricature of Lord Burghley. Cecil was often spelt Cysell, and C Sly is a fairly good anagram of this spelling. Efforts were made at various times to show the Cecils to be of some pedigree, but actually nothing was really traced farther back than Lord Burghley's grandfather, who

lived in the reign of Henry VII. Christopher Sly says, "The Slys are no rogues, look in the chronicles, we came in with Richard Conqueror"—that is Richard III, instead of William I. Surely this is more humorous as a suggested solution of the reason of the error than calling it a mere mistake of Richard for William, which appears to be the usual suggestion.

Sly appears to be very intimate with Marian Hacket, an ale wife at Wincot. Mrs. Cheke, Lord Burghley's mother-in-law, kept a wine shop at St. Mary's, Cambridge. The daughter of the ale wife is Cecily Hacket, the first name reminiscent of Cecil, and the second, anagrammatically, not altogether unlike the name Cheke, while Lord Burghley's own mother's name was Heckington, also not unlike Hacket.

Sly's favourite expression, "Sessa," and its likeness to Cecil, is probably a mere illusion, but one of Sly's friends is called John Naps of Greece, an extraordinary combination amongst such obviously English names. John Cheke, a friend of Lord Burghley's, has come down to history as one "whom men esteemed the profoundest Grecian of his time."

The slight likeness between Burghley and Burton (the name of Sly's home) is probably another illusion, but attention is drawn to it.

1579—*All's Well that Ends Well*

The wars in the Netherlands between Spain and the Dutch give the clue to the date of this play. In 1577 there had been a cessation of hostilities, but in January, 1578, they recommenced. The Dutch were very anxious that England should declare herself openly on their side and send an army to their assistance. While secretly desiring to assist them against Spain, the political situation prevented Queen Elizabeth from doing so officially, and when envoys approached her

on the subject she refused to send an English army. At the same time she had no objection to Englishmen going over as volunteers and allowed Colonel Norris and several thousand volunteers to do so.

This was the situation when the play under discussion begins :

KING : The Florentines and Senoys are by the ears ;
Have fought with equal fortune, and continue
A braving war.

FIRST LORD : So 'tis reported, Sir.

KING : Nay, 't is most credible : we here receive it
A certainty, vouched from our cousin Austria,
With caution, that the Florentine will move us
For speedy aid ; wherein our dearest friend
Prejudicates the business, and would seem
To have us make denial.

. . . . . .

He hath armed our answer,
And Florence is denied before he comes ;
Yet, for our gentlemen that mean to see
The Tuscan service, freely have they leave
To stand on either part.—(Act I, Scene 2.)

The relations, therefore, are precisely similar, and attention must be drawn to the names of the countries at war, Florence and Siena—Flanders and Spain ; the initials of the countries are the same, and Florence for Flanders is particularly interesting as it will be found to be not the only occasion when Florence is used to represent Flanders.

Continuing the history of the war—Don John of Austria, brother to the King of Spain, was leader of the Spanish forces in the Netherlands, and died on October 1st, 1578. There were many stories connected with his death, one being that he was poisoned by two Englishmen at the instigation of Sir Francis Walsingham, one of Queen Elizabeth's ministers.

In the play, Bertram takes service with the Duke of

Florence, and in Act III, Scene 5, a widow of Florence says :

> " It is reported that he has taken their greatest commander; and that with his own hand he slew the duke's brother."

As this must obviously refer to the hostile duke, we have a palpable allusion to Don John's death.

In May of 1579 peace negotiations were commenced at Cologne between the two countries, and in Act IV, Scene 3, we have it as follows :

FIRST LORD : In the meantime, what hear you of these wars ?

SECOND LORD : I hear there is an overture of peace.

FIRST LORD : Nay, I assure you, a peace concluded.

It is suggested therefore that in May, 1579, the play was nearing completion.

There is one more topical allusion. In February, 1579, England experienced the heaviest fall of snow of the time. It was certainly sufficient to have come down to history and is quoted on several occasions. Five feet of snow lay in London. Now the only reference to snow in all the works of Shakespeare is to be found in " All's Well that Ends Well." Parolles, remarking on the strength of the Florentine army, says that half of them dare not shake the snow from off their cassocks lest they shake themselves to pieces (Act IV, Scene 3). This completes the topical allusions fixing the date, although there is an obvious reference to William of Orange in Act IV, Scene 5 :

CLOWN : Why, Sir, if I cannot serve you, I can serve as great a prince as you are.

LAFEU : Who's that ? A Frenchman ?

CLOWN : Faith, Sir, a' has an English name ; but his phisnomy is more hotter in France, than there.

LAFEU: What prince is that?
CLOWN: The Black Prince, Sir; *alias*, the prince of darkness, *alias*, the devil.

The "Black Prince" was a nickname given to William of Orange.

The first Oxford allusion is again a question of age. Oxford, at the time of writing, would be in his thirtieth year, and referring to the King's health in Act IV, Scene 5, Lafeu states that "His Highness comes post from Marseilles, of as able body as when he numbered thirty."

The striking resemblance of Bertram's life to that of the Earl of Oxford is so fully dealt with in "Shakespeare Identified" that it is unnecessary to point it out in these pages except so far as dates are involved. It was in August, 1578, that the Earl refused to dance before the Ambassadors of France when called upon to do so by Queen Elizabeth: six months or so later he writes of this incident when he makes Bertram say (Act II, Scene 1):

> "I shall stay here the forehorse to a smock,
> Creaking my shoes on the plain masonry,
> Till honour be bought up, and no sword worn
> But one to dance with! By heaven! I'll steal away."

Allusion is also made in the same work to the extraordinary story concerning Oxford, his wife and Lord Burghley, recalling the impossible Bocaccian situation of a wife's proxy for an intended mistress. It is gratifying, in view of this story, to find the play written four years before the birth of Oxford's son, and that therefore gossip which mentioned that Bertram's life was the author's, carried the story to its fullest extent and fathered all the incidents on him, a mistake against which the reader of this book has been warned. If it were a true story it would be

unpleasant to think that the author could have made it the subject of a play.

The identity of Parolles, who appears at some time to have got himself in disgrace in Italy—" You were beaten in Italy for picking a kernel out of a pomegranate : you are a vagabond and no true traveller " (Act II, Scene 3)—is of interest but has not been fixed. Possibly the name Parolles is reminiscent of the same Paretti referred to in " Two Gentlemen of Verona," who travelled with the Earl of Oxford in 1575.

CHAPTER V

1580–1584—Middle Court Period

1580—*Much Ado about Nothing*

The earthquake of 1580 which, with some commentators, places the date of "Romeo and Juliet" as 1591, is also responsible for the date of this play. Some people consider such a slight earthquake (as compared to some Italian ones) to be too trivial to be referred to, forgetting that what might be trivial to Italy would not be so to England, a country not subject to earthquakes. Possibly, however, the difficulty of placing "Romeo and Juliet" so early as 1591 is their real cause of objection. The earthquake undoubtedly did cause considerable stir in England and is written about by many people, notably Spenser, and mentioned in histories. When Don Pedro remarks to Benedick, "Nay, if Cupid have not spent all his quiver in Venice, thou wilt quake for this shortly," Benedick replies, "I look for an earthquake too then," and Don Pedro says, "Well, you will temporise with the hours," which presumably means, you will be in accordance with the times (Act I, Scene 1). Why "too"? There is no mention of anyone else having experienced an earthquake, and why drag in an earthquake at all? It can only be a reference to what they have all recently experienced. Although only helping very approximately to the date, it may be mentioned that the name Don Pedro, Prince of Arragon, and Don John, his bastard brother, are

obviously taken from Philip, King of Spain, and Don John of Austria, his natural brother. The latter, as previously mentioned, died towards the end of 1578.

As is well known, in 1570 a Bull of Excommunication was issued by Pope Pius V against Queen Elizabeth. In 1580 this Bull again came very much to the fore. When Father Campion and Father Parsons came to England to organise a Roman Catholic revival, Pope Gregory VII issued a faculty to them moderating and explaining the original Bull. Whether this was the only Bull of Excommunication at the time, or whether there was a second one, is not quite clear, but it is certain that Dr. Watson, late Bishop of Lincoln, and Richard Creagh, Archbishop of Armagh, who was imprisoned in the Tower, were concerned with some Bull of Excommunication at this time. There is reference in the State papers or the Hatfield ones, that one Antonio Fogaca gave evidence that a Fleming, probably the servant of Dr. Watson, made the copy of this Bull. Whatever the exact facts may have been, excommunication was a topic of the moment in 1580, and the word is only once used in Shakespeare, namely in this play, for in Act III, Scene 5, Dogberry says :

> " We will spare for no writ I warrant you ; here's that shall drive some of them to a non-come ! Only get the learned writer to set down our excommunication, and meet me at the gaol."

One more topical allusion only of any definite time is noticed. On July 7th, 1580, a Proclamation against building was issued from Nonesuch Palace in the following terms : " Her Majesty doth charge and straightly command all manner of persons, of what quality soever they be, to desist and forbear from any new buildings of any house or tenement within three

miles from any of the gates of London." A jocular reference to this may be found in the following, from Act I, Scene 1 :

BENEDICK : . . . and so I commit you.
CLAUDIO : To the tuition of God ; from my house, if I had it—
DON PEDRO : The sixth of July ; your loving friend, Benedick.

Turning now to the Oxonian allusions, it is first suggested that the name Benedick is taken from Bolebec, or Bullbeck as it was also spelt, and that Beatrice is very largely intended to be Lady Mary Sidney. When Benedick first takes notice of her he remarks : " What, my dear Lady Disdain ! Are you yet living ? " Disdain, or disdayne, is a fair anagram of the name Sidney. Mary married the Earl of Pembroke, whose family name was Herbert, and when Hero and Margaret are chaffing Beatrice about Benedick there occurs the following :

BEATRICE : By my troth, I am exceedingly ill—heigh-ho !
MARGARET : For a hawk, a horse, or a husband ?
BEATRICE : For the letter that begins them all, H.
(Act III, Scene 4.)

Comparing Don John and Benedick she says : " The one is too like an image ; and the other too like my lady's eldest son, evermore tattling." " My lady's eldest son " is obviously " my eldest brother " ; and appears to be a gibe on the Earl of Oxford's part at Sir Philip Sidney, who was Mary's eldest brother. Beatrice, on her part, jeers at Benedick in calling him Signior Montanto—a fencing term—which may have reference to the duel between him and Philip which did not come off. He, on his part, makes play on his own name in Act V, Scene 3, when Beatrice remarks to him that not one wise man in twenty will praise

himself. Benedick replies that it is " most expedient for the wise—if Don Worm his conscience find no impediment to the contrary—to be the trumpet of his own virtue as I am to myself." Now there is only one person whose conscience could be an impediment to a man blowing his own trumpet, and that is the person himself, therefore by Don Worm he means himself, and, as mentioned in the biography, Vere was also spelt Ver, which is the French for worm. To what extent these plays on words can be extended is difficult to say, although the punning contests in " Love's Labour's Lost " and " Romeo and Juliet " show some of them to be very far-fetched.

Taking Bolebec, Bole is the trunk of a tree and bec, or beak, is a protuberance. The name itself therefore has some similarity to the branch of a tree. Benedick, after being unmercifully chaffed by Beatrice in Act II, Scene 1, says: " She misused me past the endurance of a block ; an oak but with one green leaf on it would have answered her."

The estrangement between the Earl of Oxford and his wife has been referred to in his biography, and it is hardly necessary to point out the number of times this is the theme of the plays. Claudio and Hero, Leontes and Hermione, Othello and Desdemona, Posthumus Leonatus and Imogen ; and the woman is invariably wronged, and yet, except in " The Winter's Tale," the man invariably has cause to believe that the woman is wrong, and invariably expresses his sorrow at the end. From an Oxford point of view this is as great an apology as could be made publicly for his treatment of his wife. As this need not be referred to continually, some of the apologies may here be quoted :

CLAUDIO (*after Borachio's confession*) : I have drunk poison while he uttered it.

LEONTES : Our shame perpetual.

OTHELLO : Of one that loved not wisely, but too well ;
Of one not easily jealous, but being wrought
Perplexed in the extreme.

POSTHUMUS LEONATUS. Ah, me ! most credulous fool,
Egregious murderer, thief, anything
That's due to all the villains past, in being,
To come !

Truly " through Oxford glasses " it may be said that the author did his best to make amends.

It has been mentioned that the Earl of Oxford was responsible for the introduction of scented gloves into England, so Hero's remark (Act III, Scene 4) that " These gloves the count sent me, they are an excellent perfume," is only one that would be naturally expected.

We now come to the most interesting allusion of the play, though perhaps a bold suggestion. The commencement of Act II, Scene 3, is as follows :—

LEONATO'S ORCHARD.

(*Enter* BENEDICK.)

BENEDICK : Boy ! (*Enter a* BOY.)

BOY : Signior ?

BENEDICK : In my chamber window lies a book ; bring it hither to me in the orchard.

BOY : *I am here already, Sir.*

BENEDICK : *I know that, but I would have thee hence, and here again.* (*Exit* BOY.)

Surely this is a curious scene. In the first place it appears to be so absolutely unnecessary. In the second place, what a curious reply the boy makes to Benedick's command.

The suggestion is, that this is nothing more nor less than the Earl of Oxford's version of the famous tennis court scene between him and Sir Philip Sidney, which occurred in 1579. The Earl of Oxford tells Sir Philip Sidney he wants the court.

SIR PHILIP SIDNEY: I am here already, Sir.

EARL OF OXFORD: I know that, but I would have thee hence.

This appears to be quite a reasonable attempt at a solution of what otherwise can only be regarded as a very extraordinary scene, and completes the allusions in this play.

1581–2—*Troilus and Cressida*

In 1581, as mentioned previously, the Earl of Oxford went to the Tower, remaining out of favour with Queen Elizabeth until 1583, and so the plays for a time lose their Court setting. Although this play is probably full of topical allusions, only two have been found which at all can fix the date. The first is the incident in the Trojan War which he fixes upon, and round which he set the play—namely, the challenge of Hector to the Grecian warriors and the fight between him and Ajax, while Achilles, for whom the challenge was meant, held aloof in his tent.

In 1581, during a cessation of hostilities in Flanders, a certain Captain Thomas, who was fighting on the Spanish side, challenged Colonel Norris, the English leader, to single combat. Norris refused to accept the challenge, but it was taken up by Roger Williams, and a duel followed between the lines and in the presence of the two armies. The engagement was indecisive and ended in a friendly drinking bout, in much the same manner as ended the fight between Hector and Ajax.

The other incident which fixes the date is the fact that a play called "Agamemnon and Ulysses" was acted at Court by the Earl of Oxford's company in 1584. Strictly this should have led to the placing of the play in 1583 and not 1582, but bearing in mind that the Earl was out of favour and that his company

was touring in the provinces about this time, the acting of it two years after writing is not surprising. It is suggested in the chronology of the plays that these were originally two plays—" Troilus and Cressida " and " Agamemnon and Ulysses." The point is not of great importance and is suggested principally from Oxonian reasons—the first, because of this play, " Agamemnon and Ulysses," being acted at Court ; and the second, to find a play for this otherwise blank year. There does, however, appear to be a certain reason in the argument. " Troilus and Cressida " is much longer than most of the plays of this period. The ending of the play with Pandarus's final remarks in the midst of a battle-field appears to be singularly ill-placed. It seems that while the battle-field might end " Agamemnon and Ulysses," it should not end " Troilus and Cressida." Furthermore, the Trojan characters have very little to do with the Greek characters, and the scenes are such as to make it very easy to separate the two plays. If there were two plays, the dates suggested are, " Troilus and Cressida," 1581, and " Agamemnon and Ulysses," 1582.

1583—*Hamlet*

The date of this play is first fixed in a general way by an Oxonian allusion, and then more accurately fixed by other topical allusions. Amongst Shakespearean commentators there appears to have been a certain amount of controversy as to Hamlet's apparent age being thirty and the reason for his being made this age. It all arises through the fact that the gravedigger says he has been sexton at the churchyard, " man and boy, thirty years," and that he came there " the very day young Hamlet was born," thus fixing Hamlet's age at thirty. One of the reasons given for the age is that the part was taken by Burbage, who was

not a young man, but this appears rather a poor form of argument. "Hamlet" is a play which the author would naturally expect to live, and the part in its time would be acted by actors of various ages. It is hardly likely, therefore, that the author would suit the principal character's age to that of a particular actor. The real point of the gravedigger remarking that he came there on the day young Hamlet was born appears to have been missed. He also states that he came on that day that our last King Hamlet overcame Fortinbras. The writer obviously wishes to tell the reader that Hamlet was born on the day that the last King Hamlet overcame Fortinbras. Yet, so far as the play is concerned, there is no reason for this great detail. Treating it as a reference to the author, it is very different. First let us consider what the countries are. In the play they are two northern countries, Denmark and Norway, the scene being laid in Denmark. If Denmark and its Court may be accepted as being England, the most natural country for Norway to be is Scotland. When did England last overcome Scotland? Either on the date of the last battle which was a victory, or on that date when war ended between the two countries. Now, war ended between the two countries in the reign of the last king, namely, Edward VI, for peace was declared on April 1st, 1550, at Boulogne. The Earl of Oxford was born on April 2nd, 1550, and therefore—within a few hours—he was born when England last overcame Scotland. We, therefore, so far place the date of the play as 1580, when the Earl was thirty years of age. But in the same graveyard scene there is another date reference. Yorick had lain in the earth three-and-twenty years, and the question then arises, who was Yorick? Research will show that there was only one jester of note who fits the case, viz., Will Somers, King Henry VIII's jester. Will Somers died in 1560,

and as the jester has been dead twenty-three years this places the date of the play as 1583. In deciding between the two dates, 1580 and 1583, the two allusions have to be carefully compared. The allusion to Somers is very precise as regards time—twenty-three years. It is not twenty-four—a round two dozen; it is not twenty—also a round number. The gravedigger's time, thirty years, is, however, a round number and may be accepted as an approximate number where the two numbers do not precisely fit, and consequently 1583 is taken as the date when "Hamlet" was written. Once this date is found, other topical allusions are easily discovered. The scene is laid in Denmark. In the autumn of 1582 Peregrine Bertie, the Earl of Oxford's brother-in-law, was sent on a mission there to invest the King of Denmark with the Garter. (Note the arrival of the English ambassador at the end of the play.) He returned at the end of September, and it is not unlikely that he would have some talk with his brother-in-law about his visit there, with the result that Denmark is selected as the scene for the next play.

In Act I, Scene 1, Marcellus asks :

> "Why the same strict and most observant watch
> So nightly toils the subject of the land ?
> And why such daily cast of brazen cannon,
> And foreign mart for implements of war ?
> Why such impress of shipwrights ? "

"In 1583, when war with Spain began to loom as a near and real menace, a Royal Commission was issued to report on the whole state of the navy, superintend the building of new ships and inquire into the condition of the stores necessary for a rapid mobilisation." In Allen's "History of London" it will also be found that in 1583 "Elizabeth took all the precautions necessary, such as fitting out ships-of-war for

sea service." So the reference to the impress of shipwrights, etc., is essentially topical. Perhaps, however, the most noteworthy incident is one which occurred at the end of 1582—namely, the change on the Continent from the Julian to the Gregorian Calendar. The confusion which would ensue from this can well be imagined; England keeping one date, the Continent being ten days different. It is difficult enough even now to place dates sometimes when some authorities use New style and others Old style, and this would be so particularly in the case of one Court dealing with foreign Courts; so Hamlet's remark is singularly appropriate: "The time is out of joint."

This completes the topical allusions fixing the date, and there is one flaw in it. As a rule, the date-fixing is done entirely regardless of the Earl of Oxford. In this case the key is an Oxonian reference, viz., his birth in 1550, from which Will Somers is identified and from which the vaguer ones are discovered. The greatest Oxonian allusion, the date of the Earl's birth, has already been discussed in fixing the date, but there are a few more. This is the first play written for Court after "Much Ado about Nothing," and we again find references to the Earl's quarrel with Sir Philip Sidney on the tennis court. Polonius, in his instructions to Reynaldo (Act II, Scene 1) to spy on Laertes, mentions "falling out at tennis" as an example of the "slight sullies" he is to lay on his son. When Sir Philip Sidney challenged the Earl and the Queen forbade the duel, the reason she gave to Sir Philip was as follows: "She pointed out the difference in degrees between earls and gentlemen, the respect inferiors owed to their superiors, and how the gentleman's neglect of the nobility taught the peasant to insult both." This occurred rather more than three years before "Hamlet" was written. Now mark Hamlet's remark in Act V, Scene 1: "By the Lord,

Horatio, this three years I have taken note of it ; the age is grown so picked that the toe of the peasant comes so near the heel of the courtier he galls his kibe." He actually makes use of the same word—peasant—as the Queen used, and mentions the time that elapsed—three years—since the incident occurred.

As previously mentioned, in 1572 or thereabout it was gossiped that the Earl of Oxford had threatened to ruin Lord Burghley's daughter, and so, in Act II, Scene 1, Polonius is made to say to Ophelia :

> " I am sorry that with better heed and judgment
> I had not quoted him ; I feared he did but trifle,
> And meant to wreck thee."

This in no way bears on the question of the date of the play; it is pointed out as an allusion to an incident in Oxford's life.

Here it may be apt to make a remark about Polonius. It is nothing new that Polonius has been compared to Lord Burghley. In the early edition of the play it is believed that the name was not Polonius but Corambis. Corambis is uncommonly like the two Latin words of the Cecil motto—" Cor uno "—only instead of single-hearted it becomes double-hearted. Now, touching the daughter. If the author had the Sidneys at all in his mind it may be noted that Laertes is a fair anagram of Aster (Sidney's " Astrophel and Stella " was probably written about 1581) and Ophelia (short for Astrophelia) would be a name therefore appropriate to Sidney's sister, for Astrophel was Sidney.

One further reference to Oxford's life should not be forgotten. Hamlet, like Oxford, was attacked by pirates on his voyage to England. There is another allusion to Court topics of some importance and which also, to a certain extent, may help to fix the date of the play. This is the murder of the late king by his brother, who afterwards married the widowed

queen. This has been pointed out as having a probable reference to the story which was current that the Earl of Leicester caused Walter Devereux, Earl of Essex, to be poisoned and immediately afterwards married his widow. This incident occurred in 1576, but about 1583 the story was revived and there was much scandal published about the Earl of Leicester, particularly in a pamphlet entitled "Leicester's Commonwealth," supposed to have been written by Father Parsons, the Jesuit priest. The murder of Essex was therefore, to a certain extent, topical in 1583, and might well be referred to in a play written by a political rival. A point which may not have been noted before is the name of the murderer in the play within the play. He is called Lucianus, a name somewhat reminiscent of Leicester, and this is mentioned as it is not the only time that a name of the same nature is used for the Earl of Leicester.

1584—*The Winter's Tale*

This date will presumably need considerable justification in view of the fact that the plot of the play is supposed to be derived from a tale which was not in existence in 1584, the time when it is claimed that the play was written. The dates, however, are the result of topical allusions and not preconceived notions, and it is as possible for a book to be written from a play as a play from a book, or both of them from some independent source. The suggestion that the book is founded on the play and not vice versa has one advantage. The play makes a geographical slip, giving Bohemia a coast line, and it is understood that the book falls into the same error. Now it is reasonable to believe that the adaptor might accept the original as being correct without too closely verifying the truth of the statements. It is the

original author of the mistake that one naturally criticises. The error where the play is the original is not so flagrant as it is where the book is the original, when the topical nature of the play is taken into account. As shown in the previous plays, the Court scenes are really English Court scenes. The places selected are purely nominal, and in this particular case it will be shown that Bohemia was selected on account of the likeness of the name and its close proximity to Bavaria, a name which the author did not desire to use, but only to hint at.

But to get to the date. In the summer of 1583 a Duke of Bavaria, Palatine of Poland, named Albertus Alasco, " came into England to see the Queen, and was nobly entertained both by her and the nobility, but having tarried here four months and run much into debt, he secretly withdrew himself and departed " (" Chronicles of the Kings of England "). Substituting the island of Sicily for the island of Great Britain and Bohemia for Bavaria, we find in the play the King of Sicily being visited by a King of Bohemia, who also secretly withdrew himself and departed. A Pole in Shakespeare's time was known as a Polack, and so the said king is named by the author Polixenes, reminiscent of Polish and Polack, but as in real life the visitor's name was Albertus, the king's one attendant is called Archidamus, while in honour of the name Alasco, and possibly on account of his debts, the greatest rogue in the play (also a Bohemian) is called Autolycus—Alasco very thinly disguised.

Now for the length of the visit. It was actually " nine changes of the watery moon." Change of moon is not only from one moon to another, but changing from wax to wane, and from wane to wax, that is, a fortnight. Nine changes will therefore be just about four months, the precise length of Alasco's visit.

When Queen Hermione is tried for infidelity she

takes the trouble to inform the Court that "The Emperor of Russia was my father, O that he were alive." The Emperor of Russia, Ivan the Terrible, did die in March, 1584.

On October 10th, 1583, at Caster, in Norfolk, a fish was driven inshore of a length of 17 yards 1 foot. This aroused sufficient interest to be mentioned by John Stow in his annals, and amongst the ballads that are sold by Autolycus at the sheep-shearing feast is one of "a fish that appeared upon the coast on Wednesday, the fourscore of April, forty thousand fathoms above water." The date is peculiar, and by juggling with the figures of the days and months some inkling both of the day of the month the fish did come ashore, and also the year the play is written, may be gleaned. It is feared, however, that an explanation would strain the patience of the reader to breaking point, so it is left to the "misplaced ingenuity" of those who care to solve it.

From 1580 to 1585 Sir Philip Sidney was hard at work writing the metrical version of the Psalms, so the clown's reference (in Act IV, Scene 2) to the songmen, amongst whom was one Puritan "and he sings Psalms to hornpipes" is reasonably topical.

When King Leontes suggests to Camillo that he should poison Polixenes, Camillo in a soliloquy says: "If I could find example of thousands that had struck anointed kings and flourished after, I'd not do it." About this time there were several examples to the contrary. On December 19th, 1583, John Somerville, an intended assassin of Queen Elizabeth, strangled himself. On December 20th, Edward Arden was hanged, drawn and quartered; while on July 10th, 1584, Balthazar Gerard assassinated William of Orange and had a particularly unpleasant time afterwards.

The use of the expression, "O that ever I was born," in this play as well as in "Hamlet," written in 1583,

is possibly too vague to help to fix the date, but attention is drawn to it.

These complete the topical allusions, and it is hoped that they are sufficiently numerous to justify the date selected.

The Oxonian allusions are disappointing to write about, for there would be one very striking one if only one doubtful incident could be verified. As it is desired in these chapters to deal only with probabilities and not possibilities, the point in question will be held over till a later chapter, and the probabilities only will be dealt with.

Antigonus, when protesting Hermione's innocence in Act II, Scene 1, says :

> " Be she honour flawed—
> I have three daughters; the eldest is eleven;
> The second and the third, nine and some five;
> If this be true, they'll pay for 't."

It will be noticed that this is precisely the number of daughters that the Earl of Oxford had at this time —Elizabeth, Frances and Bridget, for Susan was not yet born.

Now as to ages. Why were the first and second eleven and nine, while the third was *some* five ? From an Oxonian point of view it is suggested that " some five " has had a word left out, and that the youngest was really some five months. If the play was written in September, 1584, Elizabeth would have been nine and Bridget some five months. The date of the birth of Frances is not known, but let us suppose that, after Queen Elizabeth's direction in July, 1581, that the Earl should not be restored to favour till he had been dealt withal for his wife, the quarrel was patched up, Frances may have been born in April or May, 1582. (His son was born May, 1583.) His daughters at this time, therefore, would have been " IX, II and

some V months." If the ages were written in the manuscript in this manner, apparently a common method, it is possible that the II got mistaken for II in printing, and was then put first to get the right order of age. This is all an absolute supposition, but, in any case, we have the same number of daughters in the two cases. It is a great pity that the date of the birth of Frances (as it appears) is not known.

There is only one other Oxonian allusion that can be discussed at present. In May, 1583, the Countess of Oxford gave birth to a son who, however, died at birth. If "Hamlet" was written in the early part of 1583, "The Winter's Tale" will be the first play written after this sad event. In Act III, Scene 2, we find the following :—

(*Enter a* SERVANT *hastily.*)

SERVANT : My Lord, the King, the King :

LEONTES : What is the business ?

SERVANT : O Sir, I shall be hated to report it !
The Prince your son, with mere conceit and fear
Of the Queen's speed, is gone.

LEONTES : How ! Gone ?

SERVANT : Is dead.

LEONTES : Apollo's angry ; and the heavens themselves
Do strike at my injustice.

The unjust treatment of his wife, the reconciliation, and the death of the son and heir born after this reconciliation, are appropriately described in these last two lines.

There is a possibility of an allusion to Court topics. Another of the ballads sold by Autolycus referred to a usurer's wife who was brought to bed of twenty money bags at a burden. This may be a sly dig at Penelope Devereux, daughter of the Earl of Essex, who had shortly before been married to Lord Rich, whose wealth had apparently been attained by

somewhat dubious methods in connection with sales of monasteries, and who was not very popular in Court circles.

There is one other quotation which must be noticed, and which may give some assistance in proving the date of the play. 1582 was one of the plague years from which London suffered so much, 6,930 persons being carried off in that year. When Florizel and Perdita arrive in Sicily, King Leontes says: "The blessed gods purge all infection from our air whilst you do climate here."

CHAPTER VI

1587–1589—Late Court Period

1587—*Twelfth Night*

The date of this play has been fixed by Shakespearean commentators through the reference to the " new map with the augmentation of the Indies." No note has been kept as to what date this was, but the same reference will furnish the date from an Oxonian point of view. The " Shakespearean " map was one of the East Indies, the Oxonian one is of the West Indies. On page 272, Vol. VIII, of Richard Hakluyt's " Principal Navigations " reference will be found to a map of the New World, printed in Paris. This map is referred to in a letter to one Master Growte, and the extract is as follows: " Your brother-in-law, Giles Walter, showed me this morning a map printed in Paris, dedicated to Mr. Hakluyt, an English gentleman, wherein all the West Indies, Kingdom of Mexico, etc., are contained." The date of this letter is June 19th, 1587. There is a further letter on the same subject: " Cousin, I pray you, do me so much pleasure as to send me . . . one of these new maps of the West Indies dedicated to Mr. Hakluyt, the English gentleman." A reproduction of this map is to be found in the same volume. 1587, therefore, is quite suitable as a date as regards this important map allusion.

Though not so precise, the allusion to the Brownists is very topical at this time, for Robert Browne, the founder, was particularly notorious between 1585 and

1590. Browne was a relative of Lord Burghley, and it was through the latter's influence that he, on one occasion, got off imprisonment.

An unsolved allusion is the one to the bells of Saint Benet, but in Stow's "Survey of London" reference is made to the church of Saint Bennet being restored by one Mr. Fincke, though no date is mentioned. Possibly when he restored it he gave the church a set of bells.

We now come to allusions read "through Oxford glasses." Endeavour will be made to show that Olivia is Mary Herbert, Countess of Pembroke. In Act I, Scene 3, the sea captain describes Olivia as :

> "A virtuous maid, the daughter of a count
> That died some twelve month since; then leaving her
> In the protection of his son, her brother,
> Who shortly also died; for whose dear loss,
> They say, she hath abjured the company
> And sight of men."

Now, in 1587 it is correct to say that Mary's father, Sir Henry Sidney, had died some twelve months since, and that her brother, Sir Philip, died shortly afterwards; history also relates how deeply she mourned his death. Sir Philip died in August, 1586, his father having died a few months previously.

If Mary Herbert be Olivia then one of Malvolio's mysterious utterances is explained. In Act II, Scene 3, when reading the letter written in Olivia's forged handwriting, he says :—

> "By my life, this is my lady's hand! These be her very C's, her U's and her T's; and thus she makes her great P's."

In his capacity of steward and attention to her business letters he would be best acquainted with her signature, and bearing in mind that Olivia is a rich countess, we find C, U and T as three of the letters and P as the capital letter in Countess of Pembroke. While

on the subject of initials it may be well to discuss another line of Malvolio's—" M, O, A, I doth sway my life." Malvolio recognises them as letters in his name, but as he points out, though M begins " there is no consonancy in the sequel." Why are they put in this order and not M, A, I, O, which would be more appropriate to Malvolio? It is suggested that the reason is because they do not refer to Malvolio. Let us first consider to whom the letter is addressed. " To the unknown beloved." This, in itself, is peculiar, for Malvolio is supposed to believe that Olivia has fallen in love with him, her steward. He is not, for example, an unknown gallant who serenades her or writes unsigned letters to her. He is Malvolio, so why address him as the unknown beloved?

" M, O, A, I doth sway my life," but who does sway her life? Presumably " my unknown beloved." Now, " my unknown beloved " in Latin, French or Italian, will have the initials M, A, I. In Latin it will be *Meus Amatus Ignotus*, leaving O to be filled in, and M, O, A, I is actually intended to mean *Mea Oxonia Amatus Ignotus*—My Oxford, the unknown beloved. It should be mentioned here that there were many sonnets written about this time signed only " Ignoto." The author's literary knowledge is not sufficient to say whether this was the actual signature or whether it only means that they were anonymous. Many of them are extremely like the poems of Oxford and Shakespeare, and attention is drawn to the commendatory verses in Spenser's poems, signed " Ignoto." There are four verses, of which the first verse is :

" To look upon a work of rare device,
The which a workman setteth out to view,
And not to yield it the deserved prize
That unto such a workmanship is due,
Doth either prove the judgment to be naught,
Or else doth show a mind with envy fraught."

But in discussing initials the date question has been wandered from. When Malvolio considers marrying the Countess he says, " There is example for't, the lady of the strachy married the yeoman of the wardrobe," and the word " strachy " appears to be very puzzling to the commentators. On April 16th, 1587, died Anne Stanhope, Duchess of Somerset. This lady had held at one time a most important position in England, for she was the wife of the Duke of Somerset, Lord Protector of England, and her death would, therefore, create considerable stir in Court circles. After the Lord Protector's death she married a second time, but in this case very much beneath her, for she married Francis Newdigate, who was one of the gentlemen of the household of her late husband. It is suggested, therefore, that hers is the example to which Malvolio alludes. If it is not presumptuous to make a purely literary suggestion, the possibility is put forward that the word coined by Shakespeare was not " strachy " but " satrarchy." A satrap is a governor or viceroy, as was the Lord Protector, and satrarchy would be a word akin to tetrarchy, monarchy, etc.

The next point of topical interest is the use in " Twelfth Night " of the words " excellence," " excellency," " excellent " or " excellently." It is used in its variations 158 times in all the accepted works of Shakespeare. Averagely, about four times in each play. In " Twelfth Night " it is used twenty times ; five times the average and one-eighth of the whole. When the Earl of Leicester was over in Flanders in 1587 he was given the title of Excellency by the Dutch, which title he accepted. This made Queen Elizabeth very indignant, and it appears possible that the continual harping on the word in " Twelfth Night " is done to draw attention to this bit of vanity on the Earl of Leicester's part.

There is one allusion—not topical—to the Earl of Oxford's life, this time in the character of Sebastian.

Sebastian and Viola are twins and their father died "when Viola from her birth had numbered thirteen years." This was approximately the age of the Earl of Oxford when his father died.

Duke Orsino is the next character to be considered and though possibly an illusion, the anagrammatical likeness of Duke Orsino to Oxenford should be first pointed out. In 1586 an expedition to Cartagena was undertaken with Drake as the naval leader and Christopher Carleill as the military one. Carleill's ship was the *Tiger*, and one of his officers was William Cecil. This officer is supposed to have been a grandson of Lord Burghley and therefore a nephew of the Earl of Oxford, and he lost his life during the expedition. In Act V, Scene 1, we find :

FIRST OFFICER : Orsino, this is that Antonio
That took the *Phœnix* and her fraught from Candy;
And this is he that did the *Tiger* board,
When your young nephew Titus lost his leg.

It is suggested that "leg" and "life" are easily mistaken when reading manuscript and that this is a reference to the death of the Earl of Oxford's nephew.

If the sea captain and "notable pirate" is intended in any way for Drake, the following is of interest in Act III, Scene 3 :—

ANTONIO : Once, in a sea-fight, 'gainst the Count his galleys,
I did some service ; of such note, indeed,
That, were I ta'en here, it would scarce be answer'd.

SEBASTIAN : Belike, you slew great number of his people ?

ANTONIO : Th' offence is not of such a bloody nature ;
Albeit the quality of the time, and quarrel,
Might well have given us bloody argument.
It might have since been answer'd in repaying

> What we took from them; which, for traffic's sake,
> Most of our city did: only myself stood out;
> For which, if I be lapsed in this place,
> I shall pay dear.

"Repaying what we took from them which for traffic's sake most of our city did" may possibly refer to Drake's expedition in the *Golden Hind*, 1577–1580, for Queen Elizabeth caused part of the booty to be restored to Pedro Sebura, a Spaniard, who pretended to be agent for the merchants whom Drake had spoiled.

There is possibly an allusion to Sir John Perrott and Sir Christopher Hatton in Act I, Scene 4. Sir Toby Belch makes three references to a galliard when talking to Sir Andrew Aguecheek, who appeared to be a great dancer. As is well known, Sir Christopher was a famous dancer, and Sir John Perrott said that he danced into favour at Court in a galliard. When this was said is not apparently recorded, but it should be noted that Sir Christopher reached his zenith in 1587 when he was made Lord Chancellor.

One other point should not be passed unnoticed. As mentioned in the biography, the Earl of Oxford's daughter Frances died in 1587 and was buried at Edmonton. Edmonton and Ware, as readers of John Gilpin will remember, are not very far apart, so the bed of Ware referred to in Act III, Scene 2, would probably be well known to the author if he was living at Edmonton at the time.

1589—*Othello*

This year is the one following the defeat of the Spanish Armada and it may therefore naturally be expected that there will be many allusions to this important topic, and this indeed we find to be the case,

for the state of affairs between the Venetians and the Turks is very similar to that between England and Spain at this time. The strength of the Armada which was coming to invade England was the subject of many conflicting rumours. In a letter from Lord Howard of Effingham to Sir Francis Walsingham it was reported as 210 sail. A study of naval history shows that the number which actually sailed was about 130, but owing to various mishaps 120 is the probable number that actually arrived in the English Channel. In Act I, Scene 3, of "Othello" we find the Duke of Venice and his senators sitting at a Council studying the various reports of the strength of the approaching Turkish Fleet.

DUKE: There is no composition in these news
That gives them credit.

FIRST SENATOR. Indeed, they're disproportion'd;
My letters say a hundred and seven galleys.

DUKE: And mine, a hundred and forty.

SECOND SENATOR. And mine, two hundred;
But though they jump not on a just account,—
As in these cases, where the aim reports,
'Tis oft with difference,—yet do they all confirm
A Turkish fleet, and bearing up to Cyprus.

The eventual strength of the Armada which arrived off our shores was, as previously mentioned, about 120. In crossing the Bay of Biscay the Armada experienced some bad weather and barely two-thirds of the ships were in company when Medina Sidonia sighted the Lizard. On Saturday, July 20th, the Spanish Fleet was collected, so about forty more sail joined the Fleet which had been in sight of the Lizard on the previous day.

Returning to the Council chamber in "Othello" we find—

(*Enter a* MESSENGER.)

MESSENGER : The Ottomites, reverend and gracious,
Steering with due course toward the isle of Rhodes,
Have there injointed them with an after fleet.

FIRST SENATOR. Ay, so I thought. How many, as you guess ?

MESSENGER : Of thirty sail : and now they do re-stem
Their backward course, bearing with frank appearance
Their purposes toward Cyprus.

The numbers throughout are certainly very similar.

In 1586 and 1587 Leicester had been in Flanders. When the invasion by the Spanish Armada was imminent he was made Commander-in-Chief of the military forces raised to repel the invasion. In "Othello," when the Turkish Fleet is reported, the Duke says :—

'Tis certain, then, for Cyprus.
Marcus Luccicos, is not he in town ?

FIRST SENATOR. He's now in Florence.

DUKE : Write from us to him ; post-post-haste dispatch.

The similarity between the name Leicester and Luccicos is sufficiently striking to make this appear to be a reference to Leicester being given the military command at home, and it should be noted that for the second time Florence is used to represent Flanders, the first occasion being in "All's Well that Ends Well."

Following up the action of the play, Othello is sent off as Governor of Cyprus, and the scene there just before his arrival opens with a gale.

(*Enter* MONTANO *and* TWO GENTLEMEN.)

MONTANO : What from the cape can you discern at sea ?

FIRST GENT. Nothing at all: it is a high-wrought flood;
I cannot, 'twixt the heaven and the main,
Descry a sail.

MONTANO: Methinks the wind hath spoke aloud at land;
A fuller blast ne'er shook our battlements:
If it hath ruffian'd so upon the sea,
What ribs of oak, when mountains melt on them,
Can hold the mortise? What shall we hear of this?

SECOND GENT. A segregation of the Turkish fleet:
For do but stand upon the foaming shore,
The chiding billow seems to pelt the clouds;
The wind-shak'd surge, with high and monstrous mane,
Seems to cast water on the burning bear,
And quench the guards of th' ever-fixed pole:
On the enchafed flood.

MONTANO: If that the Turkish fleet
Be not enshelter'd and embay'd, they're drown'd;
It is impossible they bear it out.

(*Enter a* THIRD GENTLEMAN.)

THIRD GENT. News, lads! our wars are done.
The desperate tempest hath so banged the Turks
That their designment halts: a noble ship of Venice
Hath seen a grievous wrack and sufferance
On most part of their fleet.

and again in Act II, Scene 2—

HERALD: It is Othello's pleasure, our noble and valiant general, that, upon certain tidings now arrived, importing the mere perdition of the Turkish fleet, every man put himself into triumph.

Here we have a most accurate description of the defeat of the Spanish Armada and it is suggested that Cyprus is intended to represent Harwich, the port where Lord Henry Seymour's squadron anchored on

August 1st after the Battle of Gravelines. It may be added that the "high wrought flood," "enchafed flood," and "congregated sands" are more typical of the south-east coast of England than they are of Cyprus and the Mediterranean.

Towards the end of the play, Othello receives despatches relieving him of the Governorship of Cyprus. On August 1st the Earl of Oxford was offered the Governorship of Harwich which, however, he refused. This completes the Armada allusions, but there are further ones of great importance.

The incident in Act II, Scene 3, when Iago and Roderigo lay themselves out to make Cassio drunk and to force a quarrel on him is an accurate description of what actually occurred in the Netherlands on August 6th, 1586. This is fully described in Motley's "United Netherlands," Vol. II, pp. 92 *et seq.* In one place it is dated 1585, but the context shows this to be a clerical error for 1586. The victim was Edward Norris, a brother of Sir John, and the scene was at a supper party at Count Hohenlo's house. There appears to have been some enmity between Count Hohenlo and the Norris family generally. A plot was laid to make young Norris drink a toast with everybody at the table. This he protested against after having drunk a considerable amount, and a quarrel ensued between him and the Count. It is probably needless to quote here the lines showing how, in "Othello," Iago induces Cassio to drink against his will and how eventually a quarrel arises between Cassio and Roderigo.

The next incident to be discussed is also a military one, relating to affairs in Flanders, and throws a light on one of the mysterious sayings of Shakespeare.

When the Earl of Leicester and Norris were in the Netherlands in 1586, the Dutch and English armies were under English command. Leicester came home

before the invasion of the Spanish Armada, his resignation being announced in April, 1588; Norris came home and went with Drake on an expedition to Cadiz in 1589. After their return a Dutch military leader sprang into fame and became the leader of the combined armies. This was Maurice of Nassau. Peregrine Bertie remained in the Netherlands in command of the English army, but he appears to have become discontented with his position and was continually asking to be recalled home. There was also much jealousy in the English Army over Maurice of Nassau being placed in supreme command. This brilliant military leader has undoubtedly come down to history as a great mathematician and he was sneered at by the more practical English soldiers as a theorist. In July, 1588, Peregrine Bertie's wife went out and joined him at Gertrydenberg in the Netherlands, so on the one hand we have a theoretical leader of the combined armies while, so far as the English army only is concerned, we have a leader weary of the whole business with a wife at the front. The second in command of the English was Francis Vere—one of the two distinguished generals known as the Fighting Veres, and cousin to the Earl of Oxford. When Peregrine Bertie eventually came home in March, 1589, Francis Vere became commander of the English Army. He had been home on leave between November, 1588, and February, 1589. He, therefore, was the man most affected by the leadership of Maurice Nassau and Bertie. Turning to "Othello" we find the following (Iago is giving his reasons for his hatred of Othello):

> "Three great ones of the city.
> In personal suit to make me his lieutenant,
> Off-capped to him. . . . But he . . .
> Nonsuits my mediators; for 'Certes,' says he,
> 'I have already chose my officer.'
> And what was he?

> Forsooth, a great arithmetician,
> One Michael Cassio, a Florentine,
> A fellow almost damned in a fair wife;
> That never set a squadron in the field,
> Nor the division of a battle knows,
> More than a spinster."

There, therefore, we have exactly what Francis Vere's feelings would be, and the mystery of what Shakespeare meant when he said Michael Cassio "was almost damned in a fair wife"—although he was actually unmarried—is explained as a topical hit. Maurice Nassau (note the likeness to Michael Cassio) was an arithmetician. Bertie was almost damned as a leader by having his wife out at the front, and to complete the coincidence, Iago later on tells us that he is twenty-eight years of age, and this is the precise age of Francis Vere in 1589. It should also again be noticed that Michael Cassio was a Florentine; the third time that Shakespeare uses Florence to represent Flanders.

CHAPTER VII

1590-1591—Intermediate Period

1590—*King John*

The allusions which furnish the date are similar to those quoted by Shakespearean commentators, but, of course, refer to different incidents. The military incidents in France will be suggested by the campaign which Peregrine Bertie, after his return from the Netherlands, undertook in that year, and it may be that the author selected Falconbridge as his hero for that reason. Falcon and Peregrine need no explanation, but Falconbridge, it is understood, is derived from Falkes de Breaute, and the last name is strikingly similar to the name Bertie.

The lines in Act II, Scene 1—

> " All th' unsettled humours of the land,—
> Rash, inconsiderate, fiery voluntaries.
> With ladies' faces and fierce dragons' spleens,—
> Have sold their fortunes at their native homes,
> Bearing their birthrights proudly on their backs,
> To make a hazard of new fortunes here:
> In brief, a braver choice of dauntless spirits,
> Than now the English bottoms have waft o'er,
> Did never float upon the swelling tide,
> To do offence and scathe in Christendom."

refer to the expedition of Drake and Norris to Portugal, an expedition which aroused tremendous enthusiasm in England.

There is again a reference to the Armada in Act III, Scene 4:

KING PHILIP : So, by a roaring tempest on the flood,
The whole armada of connected sail
Is scattered and disjoined from fellowship."

It is well known historically how Queen Elizabeth made a scapegoat of Davison, the secretary, and blamed him for the execution of Mary Queen of Scots, saying that it had not been her intention that the warrant of execution should be delivered. King John's speech beginning :

" It is the curse of kings to be attended
By slaves that take their humours for a warrant,"

has been quoted by Shakespearean commentators as referring to this, but it is more topical in 1590 than in 1594, the Shakespearean date.

Davison was imprisoned in the tower in 1587 and released in 1589. The Earl of Essex wrote to James VI in April, 1590, to enlist his influence on Davison's side. In 1590, when Walsingham died, many persons urged Elizabeth to bestow the vacant secretaryship on Davison.

There are no definite Oxonian allusions to be considered, but in view of the Shakespearean view that the grief of Constance at the loss of her son is so ably expressed owing to Shakespeare's own personal loss of his son, it may be mentioned that the Earl of Oxford had lost his daughter Frances two years previously.

1591—*Richard II*

After " King John " came " Richard II " and the date can probably be fixed by an allusion in Act II, Scene 4. Referring to a rumour that Richard is dead, a captain says :

" The bay-trees in our country are all withered,
And meteors fright the fixed stars of heaven ;
The pale-faced moon looks bloody on the earth,
And lean-looked prophets whisper fearful change.

. . . . . .

These signs forerun the death or fall of kings."

The story of the bay trees being withered is taken direct from Holinshed, but the remainder is an invention of the author's imagination. In 1591 such a prophet was stirring up strife. This was William Hacket, who came to London about Easter, 1591, and proclaimed himself the Saviour. Amongst his adherents were two gentlemen named Coppinger and Arthington, the former holding a small post in the Royal Household. They talked of dethroning the Queen and of setting Hacket in her place. Hacket was eventually executed on July 28th, 1591, and is probably the lean-looking prophet referred to.

An historical error may form one of the calendar allusions which help occasionally to settle the dates of the plays. In Act IV, Scene 1, Bolingbroke says :

" On Wednesday next we solemnly set down
Our coronation ; lords, prepare yourselves."

Now, the historical incidents of this play are taken from Holinshed, who states that Henry IV was crowned on St. Edward's day, which was October 13th. A very few lines previously he mentions that the eve of St. Edward's day was a Sunday. Why, therefore, does the author make coronation day a Wednesday instead of a Monday ? Is it altogether a coincidence that in 1591 October 13th was a Wednesday ?

Turning to the Oxonian allusions another historical error forms the subject of the first one. The Duke of Norfolk, when banished by King Richard, says :

" The language I have learned these forty years,
My native English, now I must forego ! "

although actually he was only about thirty years of age at the time. Why this alteration in his age ? The Earl of Oxford is something over forty-one at the time, so would have learned the language for forty years, and the Duke of Norfolk's age is altered to that of the author at the time of writing the play.

In Act III, Scene 1, when Bushy and Green are brought before Bolingbroke, he says to them :

" You have misled a prince, a royal King,
A happy gentleman in blood and lineaments,
By you unhappied and disfigured clean ;
You have in manner with your sinful hours
Made a divorce betwixt his queen and him ;
Broke the possession of a royal bed,
And stained the beauty of a fair queen's cheek,
With tears drawn from her eyes by your foul wrongs."

There is again no historical authority for this, but it is precisely what occurred to the Earl of Oxford with regard to his first wife, Anne Cecil, though the names of the calumniators do not appear to be known.

Bolingbroke's speech to Exton, the murderer of King Richard, at the end of the play, is again reminiscent of Queen Elizabeth's treatment of Davison after the execution of Mary Queen of Scots.

1591—*Romeo and Juliet*

We now come to the most interesting play of all from an Oxonian point of view, for in this one play are to be found about twenty allusions of various sorts—good, bad and indifferent—which refer to the Earl's personal life. So far as the date is concerned it is fixed, in the first place, by the earthquake of 1580, for the nurse remarks that " 'tis since the earth-

quake now eleven years," but this is not the only topical reference. England had her coal troubles in the sixteenth century, as we do in the twentieth, and it is on record that in 1590, owing to a coal combine, the price of coal went up from four shillings to nine shillings a caldron—a 125 per cent. rise—the discomfort of which we of the present day can fully appreciate. But this is not all, for " in 1591 a contest arose between the Lord Mayor and citizens of London, and the Lord High Admiral of England, in respect to the right of coal meterage ; but on the Mayor and citizens showing their indubitable right to the same, the Admiral receded from his pretension and acknowledged the property to be theirs." The citizens had this right confirmed by the Queen at the intercession of Lord Burghley. Coal, therefore, was a burning question in more senses than one at this time, and consequently it is singularly appropriate to find, after the prologue, the first words of Act I, Scene 1 to be :

SAMSON : Gregory, on my word, we'll not carry coals.

Turning to the Oxford allusions, we will first consider Romeo's remark in Act I, Scene 4 : " For I am proverbed with a grandsire phrase, I'll be a candle holder and look on." It is admitted that this may be taken for a very ordinary remark to be used in the play. So far as the play is concerned, it presumably means that as the proverb—which is as old as the times of his grandparents—has it, he will be a candle-holder and look on. This is quite a natural thing to say, assuming that there was such a proverb in existence, and there is no reason to question it. When, however, a look-out is being kept for personal allusions, there are points in the remark which are noticeable. If it is not presumption to say so, it does appear a clumsy way of expressing the meaning, to say he is proverbed

with a phrase; and if this clumsiness is admitted, and it is consequently accepted as not the real meaning, then it appears that Romeo had some family motto, or something of that nature, to which he is punningly alluding. There is nothing, however, in his name to cause such a remark. Now turn to the Earl of Oxford. His grandmother's name was Elizabeth Trussell. "Trussell" is an old way of spelling "trestle," and an old meaning of the word "trestle" is a stand or frame for candles or tapers burning in religious worship. It can, therefore, be literally said that through his grandmother, the Earl was a candle-holder. In his grandmother's name of Trussell, he is, in fact, proverbed with a grandsire phrase, and consequently he will be a candle-holder and look on. If it is merely a coincidence it is a most extraordinary one.

Now study Mercutio's remark about Romeo in Act II, Scene 4: "O! here is a wit of cheveril that stretches from an inch narrow to an ell broad." Cheveril in the original is spelt "cheverell," and inch is either "inche" or "ynche." It will be noticed, therefore, that the word "cheverell" ends with "ell" and it commences with "che." "Che" is three-fifths of the word "inche," and is therefore "an inche narrow." Now let us stretch the word cheverell a little.

Thus: Che—ver—ell.

We find the word "ver" stretching from the inch narrow to the ell broad. Vere, or Ver, is the Earl of Oxford's own name, and thus no doubt is left as to whom the wit of cheverell stretching from an inch narrow to an ell broad refers.

In 1591 the Earl married Elizabeth Trentham, Maid of Honour to the Queen, after which time he retired from Court, and it is reasonable to believe had a

quarrel with Her Majesty on the subject of his marriage. Now turn to Act II, Scene 2 :

(JULIET *appears at a window.*)

ROMEO : But, soft! what light through yonder window breaks ?
It is the East, and Juliet is the sun !—
Arise, fair sun, and kill the envious moon,
Who is already sick and pale with grief
That thou, her maid, art far more fair than she ;
Be not her maid, since she is envious ;
Her vestal livery is but pale and green,
And none but fools do wear it ; cast it off.

Perhaps the reader should be warned that in some versions the livery is " pale," and in others it is " sick."

The vestal is obviously the Queen, and the Tudor livery actually was white and green ; the Queen is jealous that the Earl of Oxford finds Elizabeth Trentham, her Maid of Honour, fairer than she is, and the Earl advises her to give up being Maid of Honour, and also makes a pregnant remark on the mental capacity of those who do serve Her Majesty : " Her vestal livery is but pale and green and none but fools do wear it ; cast it off." Can it be wondered that he published his plays under a pseudonym ? It may also be noticed that after the first line, the lines quoted could well be left out with complete sense remaining, and they were therefore possibly put in as a private bit of opinion. If left out the scene could read :

" But, soft! what light through yonder window breaks ?
It is my lady, O ! it is my love."

Having got so far with Elizabeth Trentham, a most pernicious punning contest in Act II, Scene 4, must now be referred to. Benvolio and Mercutio are wondering where Romeo is, and Romeo arrives :

MERCUTIO: You gave us the counterfeit fairly last night.

ROMEO: Good-morrow to you both. What counterfeit did I give you?

MERCUTIO: The slip, sir, the slip. Can you not conceive?

ROMEO: Pardon, good Mercutio, my business was great; and in such a case as mine, a man may strain courtesy.

MERCUTIO: That's as much as to say, such a case as yours constrains a man to bow in the hams.

ROMEO: Meaning—to courts'y.

MERCUTIO: Thou hast most kindly hit it.

Now, if Mercutio wants to pun on "straining courtesy" and "constraining to curtsy," why drag in "bowing in the hams"? He could have made his pun perfectly well without it. But if we substitute Oxford and Elizabeth Trentham for Romeo and Juliet, what do we find?

Who was the cause of his straining courtesy? Elizabeth Trentham. If he was constrained to bow in the hams, he was constrained to incline his hams, or to an inclined ham. To trend is to incline, and so he was constrained or pressed to a trent ham, which is precisely what the case was. A horrible pun, it is freely admitted, but no worse than the majority of the puns of the day.

In this particular scene, when Romeo enters, they remark, "Here comes Romeo without his roe," thus leaving approximately E O. In another place he is described as appearing in the likeness of a sigh—also O. Juliet, in Act II, Scene 2, says:

> "Else would I tear the cave where Echo lies,
> And make her airy tongue more hoarse than mine,
> With repetition of my Romeo's name."

Most people will probably agree that if Juliet shouted Romeo's name in the cave, Echo would reply E O.

E. O., as mentioned before, were the initials under which the Earl used to write his sonnets.

Attention will now be drawn to allusions to the Earl's first wife and her family, and to do this it is first of all necessary to find the precise date of the action of the play. The play opens on a Sunday, a fortnight and odd days before Lammastide, and Lammastide is generally supposed to refer to the Saxon festival of August 1st, but is this correct? If so, then the date is somewhere about July 14th, and yet it is the season when nightingales and larks are singing (*vide* Act III, Scene 5). Surely Shakespeare shows himself too great a student of nature to have made this mistake. In the ball-room scene Capulet says, "Quench the fire, the room is grown too hot." Fires and mid-July appear incongruous. If, however, the year is 1591, then there is certainly one day that cannot be referred to, and that is Lammas Day, August 1st, for on the Sunday when the play opens, Lady Capulet says it is a fortnight and odd days to Lammas. August 1st in 1591 was a Sunday, so the odd days would be an impossibility. It is here suggested that Lammas was Ladymass corrupted to La'mass in the same way as Shakespeare corrupts Ladykin to La'kin. But which of the many Lady Days? The Visitation of the Blessed Virgin is celebrated on July 2nd, and it is suggested that this is the day referred to, and that the action of the play commences on Sunday, June 13th—a fortnight and five days before Ladymass. Having got so far, we find that on the day in question Capulet was holding "an old accustomed feast." Lord Burghley received the highest honour he ever received from Her Majesty on June 13th, 1572, namely, the Garter (*see* Lord Burghley's historical memoranda in Hatfield Papers), and it was probably to celebrate this that the old accustomed feast was held. As mentioned in the biography,

proposals were at one time made to marry Anne Cecil to Philip Sidney, but Lord Burghley expressed a desire to wait until she should have been near sixteen, so when, in "Romeo and Juliet," Paris approaches Capulet on the same subject with regard to Juliet, Capulet replies :—

> "She hath not seen the change of fourteen years ;
> Let two more summers wither in their pride."

Attention here might be called to Tybalt, a relative of Capulet, and reminiscent of Tyboll, the name of Lord Burghley's house (now usually called Theobalds).

Talking about Juliet, the old nurse says :

> "Susan and she—God rest all Christian souls !—
> Were of an age ; well, Susan is with God ;
> She was too good for me."

Thomas Cecil, Lord Burghley's eldest son, was the father of twins born in September, 1574. Their names were Susanna and Elizabeth, and Susanna died in August, 1575.

We now come to the Earl of Oxford's own daughters, and it is suggested that, with an almanac for 1591 by his side, he deliberately set about introducing their birthdays into the play.

Elizabeth, the eldest, was born on July 2nd, so he makes the nurse say, "On Lammas Eve at night shall she be fourteen." Next, Bridget—her birthday is April 6th—and the nurse says :—

> "'Tis since the earthquake now eleven years,
> And she was weaned—I never shall forget it—
> Of all the days of the year, upon that day."

The date of the earthquake was April 6th.

There remains Susan. Susan's birthday was May 26th, and studying his calendar, the author would find

that this was Wednesday in Whitsuntide. In Act I, Scene 5, Capulet remarks :

" 'Tis since the nuptial of Lucentio,
Come Pentecost as quickly as it will,
Some five-and-twenty years."

And so we find an allusion to the third daughter's birthday, not so definite as the other two, but still an allusion. It should be noted that the three birthday allusions come in the correct order of age—first Elizabeth's, then Bridget's, and then Susan's.

The Earl of Oxford's own birthday may naturally be expected to be hinted at where so many birthdays are being introduced. His birthday is April 2nd, and in 1591 Easter fell on April 4th. The two sentences—

" When well-apparelled April on the heel
Of limping winter treads "

and

" Didst thou not fall out with a tailor for wearing his new doublet before Easter ? "

thus deliberately referring to the beginning of April and the time before Easter, may possibly be an allusion to it.

Attention is now being drawn to what may possibly be an illusion, but which is, in some ways, curious.

Friar Laurence gave Juliet a drug which was to put her to sleep for forty-two hours. The peculiarity of this number should be noticed. It is not in any sense a round number, such as forty would be, or forty-eight, which is exactly two days. At what time did Juliet go to bed on the eve of her wedding and take the drug ? In the last scene of all, approximately an hour before Juliet wakes up, Paris, on being disturbed by Romeo, says, " Muffle me, night, awhile," therefore it is dark. This is about seven hours earlier than the time when

Juliet took the drug two days before. If Juliet went to bed as late as two o'clock in the morning, which is very late for Elizabethan times, the time when Paris appears in the last scene would be only seven o'clock in the evening. It would not be very dark at that time on either a June or July evening, and dangerous for the Friar (or Romeo as intended) to do a bit of grave-robbing. But even if this is considered to be quibbling with figures, why should the author give the opportunity to do so? If the length of time that the drug was to act had been made forty-eight hours, it would have been made so much simpler. The Montagues, Capulets and the Prince are all roused up from their night's rest, and yet this must evidently be four hours or so earlier than the time when Juliet took the drug. The number forty-two is extraordinary, and so the author feels justified in pointing out that in 1591 the Earl of Oxford was in his forty-second year, and that the number may have been selected for that reason. It is the peculiarity alone which suggests this. When, in "The Midsummer Night's Dream," Puck puts a girdle round the earth in forty minutes, it is not suggested that this is the author's age. However, it is for the reader to decide whether this theory is an illusion or allusion.

There is one further topical point which might be mentioned. About 1591 there was a feud going on between the families of Talbot and Holles, very similar to that between the Montagues and Capulets, and is mentioned for two reasons. It may help to fix the date, and also there may be some connection between Talbot and the nurse's remark:

NURSE: Doth not rosemary and Romeo begin with the same letter?

ROMEO: Ay, nurse; what of that? both with an R.

NURSE: Ah, mocker! that's the dog's name; R is for the dog—No; I know it begins with some other letter.

The other letter in this case might be T for Talbot, Talbot being a species of dog. It might also be mentioned that Tybalt again is reminiscent of Talbot.

This completes the allusions in " Romeo and Juliet," and their number seems to warrant the suggestion that the Earl of Oxford was intimately connected with this play and that he wanted to show his connection.

CHAPTER VIII

1592–1597—Historical Period

1592—*Third Part of "Henry VI"*

For the next six years the plays lose much of their interest. We are now in the period when they could have been written either by William Shakespeare of Stratford or by the Earl of Oxford; a date, therefore, proves nothing. It is not till 1598 that we begin to deal with plays supposed to have been written after the Earl's death. The Oxonian proof is, therefore, largely dependent on personal allusions, and there are three difficulties in finding them. Very little is known of the Earl's life from this period onwards, which makes it difficult to observe the allusions. The plays about this time being largely historical, increase the difficulty, and there is also the doubt of the authorship of certain plays. It is futile to search for allusions in the first and second parts of "Henry VI," when the authorship of these plays is not certain. From an Oxonian point of view there appears to be no reason for supposing there was any collaboration in any of the plays (with the exception, of course, of those unfinished at the time of death). The third part of "Henry VI" appears to be the one of these three plays most generally accepted as the work of Shakespeare, and it was acted by a different company from the other two plays. It is, therefore, selected as a genuine play of "Shakespeare," and its date, 1592, is assumed from the famous tirade of Robert Greene against the author. This occurred in 1593, and a hint as to the personage against whom the attack was directed is conveyed by

parodying the line from the third part of " Henry VI " : " O tiger's heart wrapped in a woman's hide "— " woman's hide " being changed to " player's hide." This famous piece of invective will be discussed in great detail later. In the meantime, it is sufficient to say that its date of 1593 is the reason for placing the play as 1592. There is possibly also a literary reason for fixing on this date. " Romeo and Juliet " has been shown to be dated 1591, and the line in " Henry VI " already mentioned is very similar to one in " Romeo and Juliet "—" O serpent heart hid with a flowering face."

One allusion only has been found bearing on the Earl of Oxford's personal affairs. At this time he was still without an heir, but had three daughters. In Act II, Scene 1, Edward, talking to his brother Richard, says :

" Whate'er it bodes, henceforward will I bear
Upon my target three fair-shining suns,"

To which Richard replies :

" Nay, bear three daughters ; by your leave I speak it,
You love the breeder better than the male."

There must be some reason for Richard making such a cryptic remark over and above Edward's partiality for women, and the author's lack of an heir and his three daughters furnishes the reason.

This completes " Henry VI," so a few remarks will be made on Robert Greene and his utterances.

The interest from an Oxonian point of view is very considerable. Robert Greene says that the man he is attacking is not the only " Johannes Factotum " that can write a play. Now, a factotum is a servant who has the entire management of his master's affairs. What was Oxford ? Oxford was the Lord Great Chamberlain, and a chamberlain is one charged with

the superintendence of domestic affairs. In fact, "factotum" and "chamberlain" are practically identical in meaning, so this remark makes a direct reference to the Earl of Oxford's office. But having attacked "Shake-scene" himself, Greene warns other younger poets from doing the same thing: "Sweet boy, might I advise thee, be advised and get not many enemies by bitter words; inveigh against vain men for thou can'st do it, no man better, no man so well; thou hast a liberty to reprove all and name none, for no one being spoken to, all are offended; none being blamed, no man is injured." And then he gives the reason—"Stop shallow water still running, it will rage; tread on a worm and it will turn." Surely this is a curious mixture of similies. Shallow water and worms. It does not, however, appear so curious when one reflects than an ox ford is shallow water, and that vere, or ver, is a worm.

Greene says in effect: Shakespeare with his identity hidden under that of a play-actor is not the only chamberlain that can write a play, but don't abuse him too much, for if Oxford is thwarted he will get angry, and Vere if insulted will hit back. This may be a coincidence or it may be an illusion, but if Robert Greene had really wanted to refer to the Earl of Oxford, he could hardly have done so in a more conclusive manner.

Having for the moment left the plays for contemporary writing, a remark may be mentioned which occurs in the old burlesque, "The Return from Parnassus." Most writers have some pet mode of expression which continually crops up. Perhaps Shakespeare's favourite one is most well known by Lady Macbeth's remark:

"All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand,"

but there are many more of a similar nature.

" Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood clean from my hand ? " (" Macbeth ").

" Not all the waters in the rough rude sea
Can wash the balm from an anointed king "
(" Richard II ").

" All the waters of the Wye cannot wash your Majesty's Welsh plood out of your pody " (" Henry V ").

" The wide sea hath drops too few to wash her clean again " (" Much Ado about Nothing ").

" Is there not rain enough in the sweet heavens
To wash it white as snow ? " (" Hamlet ").

This metaphor is somewhat vulgarly parodied in the play in question. Two pages act the part of their masters and Amoret's page says :

" All the physicians in the town cannot make my lady stink."

A study of Amoret in the play will show that he certainly was not intended for William Shakespeare, the actor. He was a man who had been at the University, was very fond of hawks and hounds, and was rather given to talking about them.

1592—*A Midsummer Night's Dream*

If the various calendar allusions are by now considered justifiable for fixing the dates of the plays, then 1592 is the only year that " A Midsummer Night's Dream " could possibly have been written. The play opens with Theseus remarking that " four happy days will bring in another moon," to which Hippolyta replies that " the moon like to a silver bow new bent in heaven, shall behold the night of our solemnities." The wedding day is, therefore, the day

of the new moon. Theseus again later says to Hermia, " by the next new moon, the sealing day betwixt my love and me, upon that day either prepare to die or else to wed Demetrius."

In Act IV, Scene 1, the morning of the wedding, when Theseus and his party find the two young couples in the woods, Theseus remarks, " No doubt they rose up early to observe the rite of May, and hearing our intent, came here in grace of our solemnity. But speak, Egeus, is not this the day that Hermia should give answer of her choice ? " However long, therefore, the action of the play takes—and there is some doubt about this—there is no doubt that Act V and the latter part of Act IV takes place on May 1st, the day of the new moon. This occurred in 1592 and 1592 only in Shakespeare's time, and seems sufficient therefore to fix the year in which the play was written. There is a great deal in the play about the weather, but the conditions in 1591 and 92 have not been discovered.

The reference to Greene's death, " learning dying in beggary," is appropriate to this year, for Greene died on September 3rd, 1592.

There are only two points that can be pointed out as possibly Oxonian allusions, both very vague. In the famous passage which is continually quoted as referring to Queen Elizabeth, spoken by Oberon in Act II, Scene 2—after remarking how Cupid's shaft missed the imperial votaress, he says that, " it fell upon a little western flower "—this may possibly refer to Elizabeth Trentham, who was of a Staffordshire family and therefore western so far as the Earl of Oxford was concerned, who hailed from Essex.

The other small point is the initials of Titania and Oberon, which are the same as Trentham and Oxford. It should not be forgotten that it has been suggested

amongst Shakespearean authorities that this play was acted at the wedding festivities of the Earl of Oxford's daughter Elizabeth and William Stanley, Earl of Derby.

1593—*Richard III*

There are no topical allusions to fix the date of this play and only one Oxonian one, but it is one which also gives the date fairly definitely. In " Henry VI " an allusion was pointed out referring to the Earl's lack of an heir. In 1593 this is altered, for his son, Henry, was born on February 24th of that year, and so the play commences on a note of triumph, " Now is the winter of our discontent made glorious summer by this sun of York," and it should be mentioned that this pun on " son " is accepted by some Shakespearean commentators as one intended. This being the case, it is particularly appropriate to the Earl of Oxford's feelings at the time.

1594—*As You Like It*

It is with a great sense of disappointment that any remarks are made on this play. It is so charming as a comedy, so witty in its dialogues, and with such delightful characters, that it is one which one would particularly like to associate with a new idea of authorship. Beyond vague likenesses in the characters, which are not proof, there are no Oxonian allusions which can be put forward. The date of the play, too, appears to be all wrong. It seems more suitable to the happy Court days, yet the topical allusions seem most to fall in with 1594. There is, firstly, the reference to the " dead shepherd " Marlowe. Marlowe died in June, 1593. Then the reference to " Gargantua's Mouth." Rabelais's work was published in England in 1593. Again the " lie circumstantial." This was

taken from a treatise by Vincentio Savrolo, printed in 1594 (or 1595). The name Martext is obviously taken from Martin Marprelate and William Penry; the original Marprelate was executed in May, 1593. The possible Oxonian allusions are so vague as to afford no proof, and will only be mentioned without any elaboration or explanation.

There is the reference to Jacques selling his own lands to see other men's. Comparison between Jacques and a cypher; while "tongues in trees, books in the running brooks" may be punning allusions to the Earl's name of Bolebec or Bulbeck.

An answer to the question, who William is intended to be, would be a great help towards this play, for his age is explicitly mentioned as twenty-five.

1596—*Merchant of Venice*

The one and only point of interest in this play is the method by which the author indicates the date. Being so near to the date fixed upon by the Shakespearean commentators, it is felt that the point in question must have been noticed. Whether this is so and is referred to in some works, or whether it has been considered and put aside as improbable, is not known. Anyhow, whether old or new, subtle or foolish, it is given for what it is worth. The allusion is to be found in Launcelot Gobbo's extraordinary speech in Act II, Scene 5. He says to Shylock:

> "I will not say you shall see a masque; but if you do, then it was not for nothing that my nose fell a-bleeding on Black Monday last at six o'clock i' the morning, falling out that year on Ash Wednesday was four year in the afternoon."

The speech has presumably got somewhat mangled, but there is certainly a clear statement that Ash Wednesday was four year. Is there anything that

could be described as " four year " except leap year ? The only way of making sense of it appears to be by translating it to be " falling out that year Ash Wednesday was leap year day." If one looks for the year when Ash Wednesday was February 29th, one at once discovers that this never occurred, but in Elizabethan times they observed the Julian and not the Gregorian calendar. It is probably not generally known, that in the Julian calendar the extra day was not February 29th, but was a day, known as a bissextile day, inserted between February 24th and 25th. How this day was originally named is not known to the writer. Certainly in Elizabethan times it was called the 25th, the next day was the 26th, and the last day was called the 29th ; this can be seen by the dates of letters in the State papers. But it does not alter the actual fact that, by the Julian calendar, the added day was not the last day of the month but the day following the 24th, and with this information it will be discovered that the only year when Ash Wednesday fell on " four year day " meaning leap year day, that is February 25th, was 1596, and this, therefore, is suggested as the date of " The Merchant of Venice," and it is the only allusion calling for any discussion.

1595-1598

The plays of " Henry IV," " Henry V " and " The Merry Wives of Windsor " may be considered together, for there is only one Oxonian allusion to be discussed. Their dates are proposed for no reason other than the fact that they fill a vacant space of years, come immediately after the other historical plays, and fit in reasonably with the accepted Shakespearean theory. The only Oxonian allusion is to be found in " The Merry Wives of Windsor." Here the name of the jealous husband is Ford, the likeness of which to

Oxford will be readily recognised. It is, in fact, Oxford with the Ox removed. When Ford meets Falstaff in a disguised character, he adopts the name of Brook. Studying the name Bulbeck, which was one of the Earl of Oxford's names, it will be noticed that, while Ford is his name with the Ox removed, Beck is his name with the Bull removed, and a beck is another name for a brook, which, as a coincidence, is a curious one.

It was during this period that the first play was published under the name of William Shake-speare, and it is therefore an appropriate moment to offer a few conjectures as to why the Earl of Oxford—assuming he wrote the plays—adopted the name. The Earl of Oxford was also Viscount Bolebec. If the reader cares to look up Fairbairn's Book of Crests and studies there the Bolebec crest it will be seen to consist of a lion holding a broken spear in its paws, or it might be described as a lion shaking a spear. This crest was probably in the Earl's mind and induced him to take the name, although there was probably a certain appropriateness besides. The word Shakespeare has a certain similarity to our present-day word of " free-lance," and Oxford's character is not unlike that of a poetical free-lance. Speaking of him as if he were certainly the author of the plays, he went his own way, shook off the trammels of convention, and revolutionised the Elizabethan drama. Though a playwright he was probably still an aristocrat and was amongst the poets of the day, but not quite one of them. As regards the Christian name of William, the reader must be referred to " Shakespeare Identified " and the information there regarding Spenser's " Willie." The author, as " Romeo and Juliet " and many other plays witness, was an inveterate punster and so the following may reasonably be drawn attention to, without any suggestion as to whether it is a correct

inference, and if so, whether it is cause or effect. The first published work of William Shakespeare was "Venus and Adonis." The first words are a Latin quotation, and the first words of the quotation are "*Vilia miretur vilgus.*"

Another thought with regard to Shakespeare, when trying to find a solution to this problem, was a possible combination in French between his important characters in "As You Like It." Jacques, the cynic and man of the world; Touchstone, the witty fool. As a playwright Oxford is a happy combination of the two. The old French for Touchstone is *touche pierre*, so a combination of the two names would be Jacques pierre. This is probably an illusion and a foolish one at that, but if there is found to be any value in this book, that value should not be depreciated by the worthless portions, and so this idea is mentioned.

CHAPTER IX

1598–1603—Early British and Roman Period

1598—*King Lear*

We now once more reach an interesting stage in our investigations, for plays are being dealt with which are generally supposed to have been written after the death of the Earl of Oxford. "King Lear's" date is fixed by one commentator as 1605, and the point which fixes it is a total eclipse of the sun, which apparently occurred in October of that year and which is continually alluded to in Act I, Scene 2.

Gloucester: These late eclipses in the sun and moon portend no good for us.

Edmund: O! these eclipses do portend these divisions.

. . . . . .

I am thinking, brother, of a prediction I read this other day, what should follow these eclipses.

Unfortunately the eclipse which is usually selected was one which was either never visible in England at all, or was not a total eclipse. In a list of eclipses visible in England, as given in the "Encyclopædia Britannica," it will be found that averagely there is a total eclipse every fifty years, and that there was one on March 6th, 1598, and the next was in 1652. The "Encyclopædia Britannica" is not, however, the only work that bears this out. In Johnson's "Historical Eclipses," talking of the eclipse of 1598,

it says: "For generations afterwards the day went by the name of the 'Black Saturday.' The sun was totally eclipsed in the morning in Scotland. . . . About Oakham (Rutland) the darkness was so great that, as the people were going to market, it seemed to them like night." There is no mention of any other total eclipse anywhere near this time which was visible in England.

Let us now turn to the next piece of topical evidence. It is stated by certain commentators that the use of the names "Modo" and "Mahu" for the devil, prove that the play cannot have been written before 1603. These names occur in a work by Samuel Harsnett, published in 1603, and for that reason it is claimed that the play could not have been written before that time. There is a further reference to Harsnett's book. In Act III, Scene 4, Edgar states that the foul fiend "hath laid knives under his pillow and halters in his pew," and this also is shown to be borrowed from Harsnett.

Now, what are the real facts of the case? Roughly speaking they are as follows. A set of Jesuit priests used to get hold of certain people, apparently servant maids in the main, and terrify them into believing they had personal devils, to which they gave names. They met at certain houses, of which Lord Vaux's house at Hackney was one. Some of these people were got hold of by the authorities and examined. In Harsnett's book the reference to knives and halters occurs in an account of the examination of Friswood Williams taken upon oath *March 2nd, 1598*, but augmented and repeated May 17th, 1602. With this evidence before their eyes it is hard to understand how it could have been said that the play could not have been written before 1603. This and the eclipse in combination show that the most likely date was 1598, for evidence taken on oath is hardly likely to have been kept entirely secret.

The play may, therefore, be definitely fixed as being written in 1598. The only Oxonian point is in connection with the Earl of Kent, for once more we have an age allusion. In Act I, Scene 4, when Lear asks Kent his age, he replies: "Not so young, sir, to love a woman for singing; nor so old to dote on her for anything: I have years on my back forty-eight.' This is precisely the Earl of Oxford's age at the time. Describing what he can do, Kent says: "I can keep honest counsel, ride, run, mar a curious tale in telling it, and deliver a plain message bluntly." If, as a playwright, the Earl was deliberately using the similarity between his *nom de plume* and the name of the actor, Shakespeare, to conceal his identity, then Kent's remark in Act IV, Scene 7, is not without interest:

> "Pardon, dear madam;
> Yet to be known shortens my made intent:
> My boon I make it, that you know me not,
> Till time and I think meet."

1599—*Macbeth*

After "King Lear," the first of the early British plays, it is natural to expect another of the same series, for many of the incidents in this series are taken from Holinshed; 1599, therefore, may with confidence be looked upon as the year in which to place the topical allusions of "Macbeth." The scene most prolific in allusions of this nature is Act II, Scene 3, where the porter assumes for his own amusement the duties of porter at hell-gate:

> "Here's a farmer that hanged himself on the expectation of plenty. Here's an equivocator who committed treason enough for God's sake, yet could not equivocate to heaven. Here's an English tailor come hither for stealing out of a French hose!"

The first of these obviously refers to one who, having made a corner in the wheat market with the idea of a profitable sale, finds himself scored off, owing to a good harvest which he had not anticipated. There are several references to the hoarding up of corn at this time. One quotation may be given which occurs either in the " Domestic State Papers " or the " Hatfield Papers."

> " April, 1600, owing to the coldness of the spring and dryness of the ground, but more by unconscionable farmers hoarding up their corn, badgers and other corn-mongers keeping the same from the market or exhorting what price they listed, wheat was raised from 3/- to 6/-, 7/- and 8/- the bushel, still increasing in price."

To find the equivocator, the reader's attention is drawn to the life of one Edward Squire By profession originally a scrivener, he served on board some ship and was taken prisoner by the Spaniards. At that time he appears to have been a Protestant, but on being converted, or pretending to be converted, to the Roman Catholic faith, he was released on parole, when he formed a plan for discovering Jesuit secrets. By his attacks on Roman Catholics he again got himself imprisoned, and was then instigated by one Richard Walpole to assassinate Queen Elizabeth. In order to disarm suspicion, a pretext was found for trying him as a Protestant by the Inquisition. His method of assassination was by poison administered on the saddle, and failed. Early in 1598 he was arrested and indicted for high treason. First he denied all knowledge of the plot, then he confessed both Walpole's machinations and his own attempts ; subsequently he retracted this admission of his own misdeeds, but later repeated his confession. He was hanged on November 23rd, 1598, repudiating his former confessions, and so died, as fine an example of

an equivocator and committer of treason as could well be looked for.

There remains the English tailor who stole out of a French hose. In Baker's "Chronicles of the Kings of England" it will be found stated that in 1600 and "the year past, sundry quarrels and complaints arose between the English and French . . . touching customs and impositions contrary to the Treaty of Bloys and deceit in men's clothes, to the great infamy of our nation." What this latter consisted of is not known, and no other reference to it has been found in any history, but its similarity to the tailor stealing out of French hose is remarkable and is therefore given without any comment.

This completes the devil-portering, a topical parallel for each of the three cases. We now come to the witch scene, Act I, Scene 3, and the reference to the sailor's wife:

"Her husband's to Aleppo gone, Master o' the *Tiger*."

That there was an English ship, the *Tiger*, which used to trade to Aleppo is interesting, but conveys nothing as regards the date, for she traded in the Mediterranean for many years, but what is significant is the fact that in 1599 there was an important mission to Aleppo. At the Earl of Essex's invitation, Sir Anthony Shirley conducted a small company of English volunteers to Ferrara to assist Don Cæsare d'Este. He first went to Venice, where he learnt that the dispute respecting Ferrara had been settled, reported to Essex, and received instructions to proceed to Persia, and left Venice, May 29th, 1599. At Constantinople he raised £400 from the English merchants and £500 at Aleppo. It should, however, be mentioned that he did not go to Aleppo in the *Tiger*, but in a Venetian ship.

In 1600 Scotland altered her calendar, changing New

Year's Day from March 25th to January 1st. It is possible that this is referred to in the last speech of the play, when Malcolm says: "What's more to do, which would be planted newly with the time . . . we will perform in measure, time and place." This presumably means, newly and in keeping with the times which are new, and though perfectly appropriate to the action of the play, is also appropriate to the topical incident suggested.

It is with some hesitation that the next topical "illusion" is referred to, and it will be dealt with very shortly and in fear and trepidation. Lord Burghley died on August 4th, 1598, and the third line of the play says "When the hurley-burley's done." Hastily passing this over, it should be pointed out that the eclipse of 1598 may again be referred to in Act II, Scene 4. "By the clock 'tis day, and yet dark night strangles the travelling lamp." An eclipse is related to have actually taken place in Holinshed. So this is in no way conclusive.

This completes the references which fix the date, and there is only one Oxonian reference. If it is not an illusion, however, the reference is really quite interesting. It is another of the age allusions, but very cleverly worked out. On Macbeth's pretended discovery of the murder of Duncan he says:

> "Had I but died an hour before this chance,
> I have lived a blessed time."

There is no doubt as to the meaning of this so far as the play is concerned. The question is: Is one justified in looking for a hidden meaning here? There is a reference to age, and up to now whenever there have been age references they have generally been connected with the Earl of Oxford. Studying the remark from its play meaning, should it not have been "I had lived a blessed time," instead of "have

lived," and is "blessed" the best word to use to convey Macbeth's sentiments? What is a "blessed" time actually? If the reader cares to study the history of the word "jubilee" with regard to papal festivals, and then read Leviticus, there will be no doubt in his or her mind what "a blessed time" is.

"And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year,
It is the jubilee, it shall be holy unto you."

Seven times seven years, and then came the year which was to be hallowed or blessed. And in 1599 the Earl of Oxford was in his fiftieth year, so if he had died then he could have said on his deathbed "I have lived a blessed time." Is it justifiable to look on this as another of the many age allusions?

1599—*Measure for Measure*

The many topical incidents which are referred to in this play do not tend to give a definite time when the play was written, but probably it was commenced early in 1599 or late in 1598. The main theme of the play is the love of Claudio and Julia, with the hint that others are equally frail in their love affairs, and the consequent cry for "measure for measure." The story of the love affairs of the Earl of Southampton and Elizabeth Vernon naturally occurs to one as that on which this part of the plot is based, for whoever the author may be, it is known that the Earl of Southampton was intimately acquainted with him. In March, 1598, the Earl was sent to the Fleet Prison by order of the Queen, on the latter hearing of the state of affairs between him and Elizabeth Vernon. The Earl of Southampton was not the only courtier about whom scandal was rife at this time. In December, 1596, the Earl of Essex, Southampton's great friend, had been charged by Lady Bacon with mis-

conduct with a Court lady, and when in August, 1598, he abetted the secret marriage of Southampton, scandal renewed its attack on Essex's manner of life, charging him with illicit relations with no less than four ladies of the Court, so the times were very appropriate for a play of this nature. We now come to what is something of a difficulty. There is a very clear reference in the play to similar drastic action having been taken on some former occasion, but, unfortunately, while in one place it states that " nineteen zodiacs have gone round," in another it talks of statutes " which for this fourteen years we have let sleep." Possibly this is caused by a confusion in the manuscript between XIX and XIV. There had been an example of Queen Elizabeth's despotic behaviour towards her favourites about nineteen or twenty years previously. In September, 1578, she confined the Earl of Leicester in a fortress and indeed threatened to send him to the Tower. The occasion was when she was informed by M. Simier, the French ambassador, of the Earl's secret marriage with the Countess of Essex. If the author is out to show that the Earl of Southampton sinned no more than the rest of his class, then it is possible that the reference to the Earl of Leicester's behaviour on a former occasion would be considered appropriate.

We now come to Angelo's conduct to Mariana. Mariana is the sister of Frederick, " the great soldier who miscarried at sea," and by the wreck of the vessel she lost her dowry. Angelo had been betrothed to her, but when she lost her money he broke it off, " pretending in her, discoveries of dishonour." At the time of the action of the play it is five years since he had seen her. Let us now turn to a great general of Elizabethan times who also miscarried at sea. Sir Thomas Cavendish lost his life at sea in 1592, but news of his death did not probably reach England until

the return of the expedition in 1593. By his will he left all he had to his sister, but he appears to have lost most of his money and his ships in the expedition. His sister, Mistress Cavendish, was apparently secretly married to Robert Dudley, the illegitimate son of the Earl of Leicester, about 1591. On one occasion at Court, when Queen Elizabeth found Robert Dudley kissing Mistress Cavendish, he is reported to have said that he was already married to her. What eventually happened to the lady does not appear to be recorded, but Robert Dudley married again at the end of 1596. The histories of Angelo and Mariana, Dudley and Mistress Cavendish, appear to be sufficiently similar to justify a belief that the reference is intended. The allusions, so far, are to topics of 1598, and turning to other subjects we find in the play much discontent regarding the conclusion of a peace:

LUCIO: If the duke, with the other dukes, come not to composition with the King of Hungary, why then, all the dukes fall upon the king.

FIRST GENT. Heaven grant us its peace, but not the King of Hungary's. . . . There's not a soldier of us all that, in the thanksgiving before meat, doth relish the petition well that prays for peace.

In March, 1598, Sir Robert Cecil and Henry Herbert were sent over to France to sit on a conference to conclude peace with the King of Spain. The Earl of Essex, his party, and the army were strongly opposed to peace. At a council held in June, 1598, when this peace was under discussion, Essex strongly opposed it and Lord Burghley supported it. The latter, drawing a Prayer Book from his pocket, called Essex's attention to the text from the Psalms: "The bloodthirsty and deceitful men shall not live out half their days." The topical events being so much those of 1598 seem

to make 1599 the year of the writing of the play. On Whit-Sunday in 1599 " there were great rains and high water, the like of long time had not been seen." In Act III, Scene 2, Lucio remarks : " What say'st thou to this time, matter and method ? Is't not drowned i' the last rain, ha ? " .

One other point must regretfully be referred to, as it may possibly throw a light on the date. As mentioned in the biography, the Earl of Oxford was sent to the Tower in 1580 or 1581, and one authority has given as the reason a discreditable amour with one of the maids of honour. It may be that it is to this, and not to the Earl of Leicester's marriage, that the author refers when Claudio talks about :

> " The enrolled penalties
> Which have, like unscoured armour, hung by the wall
> So long, that nineteen zodiacs have gone round
> And none of them been worn."

Failing this one possibility, no allusions of an Oxonian nature have been discovered. Every effort has been made to discover who is referred to in Act II, Scene 1—the father of Froth, who died on All-Hallows' Eve. Sir John Perrott died in the Tower somewhere about that date, but the exact date does not appear to be recorded. His son, Thomas Perrott, married Dorothy Devereux, sister of the Earl of Essex, and of Penelope, Lady Rich, but there appears to be very little recorded about him. What adds to the difficulty in searching for this death is the uncertainty whether Hallowmas is really intended. There are signs in the plays of Roman Catholic festivals having their names altered. In " The Merry Wives of Windsor," " Hallowmas," a fortnight before Michaelmas, should obviously be " Holy Cross," which is fifteen days before Michaelmas.

1600—*Coriolanus*

The first clue to the date of this play, and also the next one, "Cymbeline," was thought of when observing the use of the word "century." At the end of one century and the beginning of the next it is only natural to assume that the word was more in men's mouths than at other times, in fact from our own experience we know this to be the case. Now, the word century is only used three times in Shakespeare—once in "King Lear," once in "Coriolanus," and once in "Cymbeline"—and for that reason 1600 was in the first place selected as the approximate date for "Coriolanus." Other evidence bears this out. Reference has already been made in "Macbeth" to the dearth of corn in 1600, and a quotation given on the subject, and it is mentioned in Baker's "Chronicles of the Kings of England" and in the Hatfield papers. This is also an important theme in the opening of "Coriolanus":

FIRST CITIZEN. Caius Marcius is chief enemy of the people.

. . . . . .

Let us kill him and we'll have corn at our own price.

. . . . . .

For the gods know I speak this in hunger for bread, not in thirst for revenge.

. . . . . .

Suffer us to famish, and their store-houses crammed with grain.

. . . . . .

MARCIUS: What's their seeking?

MENENIUS: For corn at their own rates; whereof, they say
The city is well stored.

The corn question, therefore, is essentially a topical one, but it must be mentioned that it is not only a

topical one. A shortage of corn is referred to in Plutarch's " Lives " from which the play was written.

Coriolanus himself, the Roman General, appears to be largely modelled on the Earl of Essex at that time carrying out a campaign in Ireland, and the cowardice of the Roman soldiers in Act I, Scenes 4 and 5, and the remarks of Coriolanus on the subject appear to have been called forth by similar conduct on the part of the English soldiers in Ireland. They suffered defeat by the Irish near Wicklow, and the Earl of Essex tried them by court martial on July 11th, 1599, caused one of the officers and one in ten of the rank and file to be executed, and sent their commander, Sir Henry Harrington, to prison. If Coriolanus be Essex so Menenius Agrippa is probably the author himself, and if so it appears likely that in many of the plays written about this time, Essex is the hero.

MENENIUS : I tell thee, fellow,
Thy general is my lover ; I have been
The book of his good acts, whence men have read
His fame unparalleled.

Menenius gives his own character in Act II, Scene 1 :

" I am known to be a humorous patrician, and one that loves a cup of hot wine, with not a drop of allaying Tiber in it ; said to be something imperfect in favouring the first complaint, hasty and tinder-like upon too trivial motion ; one that converses more with the buttock of the night, than with the forehead of the morning : what I think, I utter, and spend my malice in my breath."

It is in this same speech that a somewhat cryptic remark occurs. Addressing two of the magistrates of Rome, Menenius says :

" I can say your worships have delivered the matter well when I find the ass in compound with the major part of your syllables."

Now, it is a curious fact that in 1600 the names of the two Sheriffs or head magistrates of London were Thomas Smith and Thomas Cambell, so they actually did have " ass " in compound with the major part of their syllables. It may possibly be these who are being " taken off " in Menenius's speech.

1600—*Antony and Cleopatra*

There are three very slender reasons for placing this play in 1600. The first is that it would naturally come about the same time as the other Roman plays. The second is that it is understood this play is very similar to " Macbeth " as regards literary style, and " Macbeth " has been placed in 1599. The last reason has to do with " Cymbeline." As will be shown presently, " Cymbeline " is placed as 1601. Now, there are only two plays in Shakespeare where the asp is referred to as the worm of the Nile, and one is " Cymbeline," which, as an ancient British play, is an extraordinary place to find it. If the author had just previously been writing " Antony and Cleopatra " it is not quite so surprising an allusion, and so " Antony and Cleopatra " is placed as 1600.

Turning to Oxonian allusions, we find the last age allusion. The reader has been warned previously that an allusion is not suggested to be complete identification with the character, and this will be particularly appreciated in observing the reference to the Earl of Oxford's age, which is now fifty. Charmian, speaking to the soothsayer in Act I, Scene 2, says, " Let me have a child at fifty."

In Act IV, Scene 8, Antony makes use of a most curious term of endearment to Cleopatra. He addresses her: " O ! thou day of the world." What he means by this the writer of this book has not the slightest idea, but, with the exception of one letter,

" day of the world " is anagrammatically " the Lady Oxford." It is at least as accurate an anagram as " Amyntas," which it is understood is used by Spenser to refer to Stanley, and completes the remarks on " Antony and Cleopatra."

1601—*Cymbeline*

After a dearth of Oxonian allusions, " Cymbeline " is rather fuller than usual, and indeed, with the exception of the use of the word " century," already discussed in " Coriolanus," they are all Oxonian. Signs are now showing of the approaching end. " Coriolanus " was probably not completed by the author, and " Cymbeline " certainly is not, for the scene when Jupiter descends in thunder and lightning is palpably not Shakespearean even to the least literary critic.

Once more the author returns to the old jealousy topic ; again the lady is innocent and again the man, however much one may take exception to his actions, had good ground for his jealousy.

The most noteworthy point to be referred to is the speech of Belarius in Act III, Scene 3 :

> " Then was I as a tree
> Whose boughs did bend with fruit ; but in one night
> A storm or robbery, call it what you will,
> Shook down my mellow hangings, nay, my leaves,
> And left me bare to weather.
> My fault being nothing, as I told you oft,
> But that two villains, whose false oaths prevailed
> Before my perfect honour, swore to Cymbeline
> I was confederate with the Romans ; so
> Followed my banishment ; and, this twenty years,
> This rock and these demesnes have been my world."

It was just twenty years previously that Lord Henry Howard and Charles Arundel had accused the

Earl of Oxford of being a Roman Catholic, and twenty years since the Earl had been sent to the Tower.

Amongst the numerous estates owned by the Oxford family was one called Campes, and somewhere about his great-grandfather was an ancestor known as Little John of Campes. When Imogen, in Act IV, Scene 2, describes Cloten (whom she mistakes for her husband) as her master, and is asked his name, she replies, " Richard du Champ "—a name which has caused some comment, but which may have been used on account of its similarity to " of Campes."

1602—*Julius Cæsar*

The most important topical resemblance in this play is that of the Brutus conspiracy to the Essex Rebellion, and while the details of the play are accurately taken from Plutarch's " Lives," their similarity to the details of Essex's ill-advised action are very significant. The Earl of Oxford sat on the trial of the Earl of Essex, with whom was tried the Earl of Southampton, a man closely associated with Shakespeare. The rebellion, therefore, would have a peculiar interest to the Earl of Oxford ; and the Earl of Essex being executed on February 21st, 1601, it is not surprising that in 1602 this should be hit upon as the subject of the next play. An important part of the rebellion was the attempt to rouse the feelings of the Londoners by the acting of " Richard II " at one of the theatres, and so Cassius's instructions to Cinna in Act I, Scene 3, to repair to Pompey's theatre are topical as well as being in accordance with history.

Another point is the very vivid description of the night prior to Cæsar's murder :

CASCA : But never till to-night, never till now,
Did I go through a tempest dropping fire.
Either there is a civil strife in heaven,
Or else the world, too saucy with the gods,
Incenses them to send destruction,

and again :

BRUTUS : The exhalations, whizzing in the air,
Give so much light that I may read by them.

This is a description by one who has witnessed such a phenomenon, and it is interesting, therefore, to discover when such wonderful displays have occurred. According to the " Encyclopædia Britannica," there have been special epochs when these have occurred, and they occur between the middle of October and the middle of November. Sixteen such occasions are recorded between 902 and 1868 ; those in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries occurring in 1533, 1602 and 1698. At the end of 1602, therefore, the author would have a very vivid remembrance of such meteoric displays, and they would be essentially topical.

On March 24th, 1603, when the play was probably still in the course of completion, an event occurred which could not possibly escape reference, namely, the death of Queen Elizabeth, and so in Act II, Scene 2, Calphurnia says :

" When beggars die, there are no comets seen ;
The heavens themselves blaze forth the death of princes."

1603—*The Tempest*

And now comes the end, and in discussing the last play of all the writer is at issue with the author of " Shakespeare Identified," or at any rate, with his views when " Shakespeare Identified " was written. How much of the play was written by the Earl of

Oxford is not suggested here, but there are personal allusions which point to him as having certainly commenced it. They are suggested to a certain extent from conjectures. As stated in the biography and in discussing "Romeo and Juliet," the Earl's marriage with Elizabeth Trentham ends his connection with Court, where until that time he had been a prime favourite. What the nature of his quarrel with Queen Elizabeth was can only be surmised, but after 1591 his connection with the Court appears to cease entirely.

PROSPERO: Twelve year since, Miranda, twelve year since,
Thy father was the Duke of Milan, and
A prince of power.

Again he harps on this same twelve years!

"This blue-eyed hag was hither brought with child,
And here was left by the sailors. Thou, my slave,
As thou report'st thyself, *wast then her servant:*
And, for thou wast a spirit too delicate
To act her earthy and abhorred commands,
Refusing her grand hests, she did confine thee,
By help of her more potent ministers,
And in her most unmitigable rage,
Into a cloven pine; within which rift
Imprisoned, thou didst painfully remain
A dozen years; within which space she died."

But with Queen Elizabeth's death the Earl had hopes of brighter days. Whether his Roman Catholic tendencies made him favourable to Mary Queen of Scots, is not known, and consequently it is only conjecture to suppose that the accession of James would make any difference to him, but he hints at it:

PROSPERO: and by my prescience,
I find my zenith doth depend upon
A most auspicious star, whose influence
If now I court not, but omit, my fortune
Will ever after droop.

Death, however, intervened, for the Earl of Oxford died on June 24th, 1604, with his works incompleted, and without having come into his own again. May "Coriolanus," "Cymbeline," and "The Tempest" have possibly been completed by his son-in-law, William Stanley, Earl of Derby?

CHAPTER X

Some Conjectures and Unsolved Problems

There are some points of interest which have not been dealt with when dealing with the individual plays. They are certainly worthy of mention, but some of them are not certain enough to be considered when judging the individual merits of the plays ; others are of interest only when being considered together, although they filter through the various plays ; while some are purely conjectural.

If it has been shown by now that the author did deliberately make reference to important dates in his life, then there are two dates which one would certainly expect to find, and those are his two wedding days. Unfortunately, these dates are not definitely known. There are two curious dates apparently mentioned for no particular reason which occur in the plays. The first is to be found in " Twelfth Night." Sir Toby Belch and Sir Andrew Aguecheek are engaged in singing snatches of songs which were songs of the day—and known to be such—when Sir Toby suddenly bursts forth into " O ! the twelfth day of December." No such song as this has been traced, but there was a song beginning with another date called " The Brave Lord Willoughby," who, of course, was the Earl of Oxford's brother-in-law, and it therefore appears possible that the Earl used this song with the date altered so as to introduce his wedding day. Now, it is known that Queen Elizabeth came from Greenwich to Westminster on Wednesday, December 12th, 1571,

and that she attended the Earl of Oxford's marriage with Anne Cecil. It is known by letters of the Spanish Ambassador to the King of Spain, that the marriage must have taken place by Sunday, December 16th, and it is known that Lord Burghley was busily engaged with the Council on matters connected with the Spanish Ambassador on Friday, December 14th, so the only possible dates for the marriage are December 12th, 13th and 15th.

Now let us turn to the second date. In " Much Ado About Nothing," Benedick quotes the " sixth of July." This may be actually the date the play was acted, but again, it is probably uncommonly near the date of the Earl's second marriage, and may have been interpolated at a later period so as to complete the list of important dates. On July 4th, 1591, the Earl completed some agreement with Elizabeth Trentham's brother, turning over some house property in London to this brother for the benefit of his sister, and this looks rather like a marriage settlement of some sort. It is certainly curious that these two dates should be dates which could reasonably be the two wedding days.

The next point of interest is in connection with the Earl's daughter Frances, and is of particular interest in connection with the remark in " The Winter's Tale " about the three daughters—eleven, nine, and some five. Could Frances have been eleven at the time—that is to say, could she have been born in 1573, for 1584 is the year shown to be the date of the play ? All that is apparently known about her is the fact that she died at Edmonton in 1587, no date of birth being given. The fact that Elizabeth is invariably spoken of as the eldest proves nothing, for the information about the daughters in Elizabethan times is probably obtained mostly from the archives of the families into which they married, and Frances never did marry. Certainly the evidence is mostly in favour of Elizabeth

being the eldest, for Lord Burghley never mentions Frances, and the Earl congratulated himself on being a father and Lord Burghley on being a grandfather when Elizabeth was born, and on one occasion Lord Burghley refers to the Earl making no provision for his daughter, whereas it would have been daughters if Frances had been born first.

On the other hand, there is one very curious point. In the "Dictionary of National Biography" it states that Walter Devereux, Earl of Essex, tried in 1573 to arrange a marriage between his son Robert and Anne, daughter of Lord Burghley. This is obviously an error, for Anne was already married to the Earl of Oxford. The question is, whether the lady in question was Elizabeth, Lord Burghley's second daughter. The Earl says in a letter dated November 1st, 1573: "There is equality sufficient in their years." Now at this time Robert Devereux was six years of age and Elizabeth Cecil was nine. Girls in those times usually married when they were fifteen. Can a girl of nine be considered of a suitable age for a boy of six? Also, would the Earl of Essex consider a marriage with Lord Burghley's daughter a suitable marriage in any case? In a further letter written on September 21st, 1575, to Lord Burghley, and talking about his son, he says: "And to that end I would have his love towards those who are descended from you spring up and increase with his years." This looks much more like a grandchild than a child that he is referring to. But in his first letter he also adds: "Such an occasion might make me like well my lands in Essex, when, if God sends me life, I might hereafter show all offices of friendship to the good Countess your daughter" (i.e., the Countess of Oxford). Why should such an occasion make him anxious to show friendship with the Countess of Oxford, unless it was her daughter and not her sister for whom he was trying to arrange a marriage? The

fact that he uses the word " daughter " and not " grand-daughter," proves nothing. When, in later years, the Earl of Pembroke wrote to Lord Burghley, trying to arrange a match between his son and Lord Burghley's grand-daughter, Bridget Vere, he used the word " daughter " throughout. So if the Earl of Essex is referring to a daughter of the Countess of Oxford, who was this daughter, for Elizabeth Vere was not born till 1575. Frances really is a very mysterious lady. If she was born in 1573 she would have been just six years younger than young Robert Devereux, and their ages would have been most suitable. In this case, the ages in " The Winter's Tale," eleven, nine and some five months, would have been precisely correct. There is another point in connection with Frances if she were born in 1573. King Leontes says :

> " Looking on the lines
> Of my boy's face, methought I did recoil
> Twenty-three years, and saw myself unbreeched."

So the King tells us that he is twenty-three years older than his son, and this is precisely the amount that the Earl of Oxford would be older than his eldest daughter, if Frances was born in 1573. It would form another Oxonian allusion, and in combination with the " eleven, nine and some five " remark, would be another clue towards fixing the date of the play as 1584.

An endeavour has been made to show how the author indicates ages which are his own age at the time of writing the plays, and it appears possible that there is such an age indication in " Othello," though what it is has not been discovered. Othello says :

> " For since these arms of mine had seven years' pith,
> Till now some nine moons wasted, they have used
> Their dearest action in the tented field."

In a very general sense it appears that the pith in the human body develops after a certain age and increases

up to a certain age and then increases no more. Theories on this point in Elizabethan times have been searched for in vain. If they had a theory that the body developed till exactly thirty, let us say, then it would appear that Othello was thirty and nine months. If their theory was only approximately a certain age, then to deal in months would be absurd, and there would probably be a mangling of the manuscript, and it might possibly have read, " till now some nine more wasted," meaning nine years. To suit the present case it would be something like this : pith develops at fourteen ; Othello, therefore, had been a soldier since he was twenty-one. It stops developing at thirty ; Othello is now, therefore, thirty-nine. Nothing definite having been discovered on this subject, it has not been touched on in the chapter dealing with Othello, as it is not desired that it should influence the judgment of that particular play.

There are a certain number of names introduced into the plays at various times : names of people who are not characters in the plays. Omitting such cases as shouting to servants in " The Taming of the Shrew," or names of a type such as Joan or Jill, it will be found that the following occur : Frances, Bridget, Susan, Nan and Cecily, and, so far as has been noticed, no others. All these are names closely connected with the Earl of Oxford.

A few of the unsolved problems should be shortly mentioned ; they are remarks which have appeared to the writer as possibly having some topical interest.

Parolles' adventures in Italy have already been referred to, but there is also the loss of the drum, which is continually alluded to, and which ought to have some topical reference.

In the same play there is a reference to Bertram's father, and a remark, " Let me not live, after my flame lacks oil, to be the snuff of younger spirits," etc.

This is so explicit that it appears as if it should be a quotation of somebody's actual saying. To fit in with the theory, it should be a saying of the sixteenth Earl of Oxford.

Then there is a reference to Bertram's ring and the number of ancestors who had worn it.

In " Measure for Measure " there is the child one and a quarter years of age come Philip and Jacob. The names, too, of the people mentioned by Pompey as being in prison, may have some topical significance.

While on the subject of names, there is evidence that " All's Well That Ends Well " was at some period the subject of revision. Had not Shakespearean commentators pointed out the same thing, the matter would not have been touched on. To plead revision as a reason when topical matters do not agree, is a cowardly form of argument, but in this case it may be permitted. The captains of the Florentine Army mentioned by Parolles appear to have many of their names based on those of the leaders in Flanders in 1586 :

Guiltian.	William or Roger Williams.
Lodovic.	Lewis.
Jacques.	Jacobzoon.
Vaumond.	de Warmond.
Corambis.	Sir Thomas Cecil.
Gratii.	Sir Philip Sidney.

The two latter were the Governors of two of the towns in Flanders, and the names are suggestive of the Cecil and Sidney mottoes. Possibly this play was revised in 1586, after the Earl of Oxford's return from Flanders.

A matter concerning astrology was unsuccessfully followed up in an attempt to find fuller evidence as to the date of " Henry IV," viz. a conjunction of Saturn and Venus at the same time as the Fiery Trigon. The three signs of the Zodiac concerned are Leo, Aries and Sagittarius, but what three planets had to be in

them to constitute the Fiery Trigon could not be discovered.

In " Twelfth Night," the word " element " is used five times out of a total of thirty-four times in all the works, while the clown remarks, " I might say ' element,' but the word is overworn." Possibly the word was rather run to death by some poet of the period (as the words " allusion " and " illusion " are in this work).

In " Julius Cæsar," there are two anecdotes regarding Julius Cæsar which are somewhat embroidered, and which probably have a more personal significance : Julius Cæsar challenging Cassius to swim the Tiber, then nearly drowning ; and on another occasion calling peevishly to Titinius for a drink.

CHAPTER XI

Chronology and the First Folio

The topical events which have fixed the dates of the plays have now been discussed in detail, and the readers can form their own opinions as to their value. It has been shown to what extent this chronology fits from three points of view. Firstly and principally, the life of the Earl of Oxford; secondly, the Court surroundings, that is to say, plays with scenes laid at Court during the first dozen years or so; and thirdly, with regard to the accepted periods from a Shakespearean point of view. This chronology must now be studied with regard to the publication of the First Folio, but before doing so, it is necessary to consider the publication of the Quartos. The following table gives a list of the plays which were published in the Earl of Oxford's lifetime, and show the date written and the date of publication.

	Written.	Published.	Interval of Years.
Richard II - - -	1591	1597	6
Romeo and Juliet - -	1591	1597	6
Third part Henry VI - -	1592	1595	3
Midsummer Night's Dream	1592	1600	8
Richard III - - -	1593	1597	4
As You Like It - - -	1594	Not published	
First part Henry IV - -	1595	1598	3
Merchant of Venice - -	1596	1600	4
Second part Henry IV -	1596	1600	4
Merry Wives of Windsor -	1597	1602	5
Henry V - - - -	1597	1600	3

The table shows that on an average the plays were published five years after commencement of writing. "Hamlet," "Love's Labour's Lost," and "Much Ado About Nothing" were also published in the Earl's lifetime, but to make use of them for estimating the interval between writing and publication would give a false idea of the time. The fact that they were published in quarto is not, however, going to be ignored.

Why there was this interval between writing and publication will not be discussed in length. There would be the time taken in writing, which appears to have lengthened as the author got older. Possibly they were acted for some years before they were considered tested and found suitable for publication, and there may have been a final revision. The main point is that they were not published for five years.

Now let us turn to the First Folio published in 1623, nearly twenty years after the Earl of Oxford's death, and see what new plays are to be found there, and what plays one would naturally expect to find there, and also what plays one would not expect to find there for the first time.

The plays published in the author's lifetime would naturally be published (except piratically) with his approval and, to a certain extent, under his super vision, so the last of these would be that play written five years before his death. All plays written in 1599 and after would, therefore, certainly be found in the First Folio. Now, once the author started writing plays and publishing them there appears to be no reason why any play should be omitted. "Richard II," written in 1591, is the first play of a regular series that is published, so plays written between 1591 and 1598 inclusive are plays that would very definitely not be expected to be first found in the Folio. If other plays are to be first found in the Folio, then one would

expect them to be all those plays written before 1591—the date when the author started writing for publication; old plays which he had written years before for amusement at Court, and which had probably lain in his desk until the time of his death. Now let us see what plays actually were published for the first time in the Folio.

"Measure for Measure," "Macbeth," "Antony and Cleopatra," "Coriolanus," "Cymbeline," "Julius Cæsar," and "The Tempest," all written in 1599 and after are to be found there. Of the plays written between 1591 and 1598 inclusive, none are to be found there for the first time except "As You Like It." As regards this play, there is distinct evidence that it was published in quarto in 1600, and that this quarto has never been discovered, or at any rate, that it was intended to be published. Of the plays written before 1591, every one of them appear for the first time in the Folio, with the exception of "Othello" (which was published in 1622, almost at the same time as the Folio, "Hamlet," of which the first publication was pirated, which may account for its future publication), "Love's Labour's Lost" and "Much Ado About Nothing." So out of the entire thirty odd plays, "Love's Labour's Lost" and "Much Ado About Nothing" are really the only two exceptions to the expected. The chronology is completely justified by the First Folio, and again it is emphasised that it is made out from topical events only, and with no thought of the Folio.

If the Earl of Oxford was desirous of hiding his identity, he probably would not consider it advisable to publish some dozen plays which a certain number of people at Court would know he had been intimately connected with; and death would not do away with this reason. Though Henry, 18th Earl of Oxford, would not have such powerful reasons for

this suppression, he equally would not have such a powerful incentive to publish them, not being himself their author, and probably not appreciating their literary worth. Others, however, would not be so particular, and would take the opportunity if there was no fear of incurring the Earl's displeasure. Henry, like his father and many of his ancestors, was not unacquainted with the Tower, and he spent about a year and a half there at the very time that the Folio was published, and it was probably the thought that he was safely incarcerated for some time that led to the publication. Although it is no part of the writer's intention to deal with literary matters, it may be considered shirking the issue if no mention is made of Ben Jonson's famous verses attached to the Folio. When evidence shows that black is black in one case and that it is white in another, a solution of some sort must be looked for. Ben Jonson was in a difficult position—if he knew that an absence of praise on his part would be the subject of comment, if he knew that Shakespeare was the pseudonym of the late Earl of Oxford and that the family did not wish it to be made public, and if he knew that many people believed William Shakespeare of Stratford to be the author. True, the Earl of Oxford was safely in the Tower, but he might be released. It is under these circumstances that Jonson writes his verses and confesses that they are not written in the way he would have liked to have done. He talks about Shakespeare, but so far he is on safe ground, for he was Shakespeare just as much as Marion Cross is George Eliot, and then he says "Sweet Swan of Avon," and that is the stumbling block. Well! well! the Avon is a long river, and there are more places than Stratford on it; there are also more Avons than one in England, and in addition, Avon is originally merely a name for water. Perhaps, after all, Ben Jonson showed his diplomacy.

CHAPTER XII

A General Consideration of the Problem

It is not desired to make wearisome repetition of the points which have been raised, but having dealt with them chronologically, it may now be advisable to consider the various types.

First, the historical topical ones. The question has often been asked why, granting that "Othello," for example, alludes to events of 1588 and 1589, these events should not be alluded to five, ten, or even fifteen years later? Taking one play, or even two plays, individually there is no reason why this should not be done, if the events are of sufficient interest. But it appears to be a very different matter when year after year this occurs. Why should the author, writing ten or fifteen years later, select all the events of 1574 to 1589 to write about? We have the marriage of the King of Navarre in 1572, the death of the King of France in 1574, the civil war in France in 1575, the comet of 1577, the war in Flanders and the request for English help in 1578, the earthquake in 1580, the visit to England of Count Alasco in 1584, the defeat of the Spanish Armada—all being referred to in proper sequence. Is this likely to be done at any time but the period itself?

Why do new moons and May-days, leap years and Ash Wednesdays, eclipses, comets, meteoric displays, heavy falls of snow and mistakes of Coronation days, all fit in so well with the rest of the topical allusions? Are they only coincidences?

At certain stages of the research there were four things entirely unknown to the writer :

(1) That the Earl of Oxford had a fourth daughter, Frances.

(2) That the war between England and Scotland ended on April 2nd, 1550.

(3) That the extra day in leap year was ever any day but February 29th.

(4) That there was a total eclipse of the sun in 1598.

The probability of these four being facts was due to the impossibility of otherwise finding an Oxonian solution to four allusions, and the belief that there was such a solution. Is it a coincidence that all four turned out to be correct facts ?

Coming to the incidents in the Earl of Oxford's life, we have the precise length of his tour abroad, the incident with the pirates, the Sidney quarrel on the tennis court, the accusations of being a Roman Catholic, the Governorship of Harwich, the wedding celebrations when he married Anne Cecil, and the final withdrawal from Court when he married Elizabeth Trentham, followed by the birth of his son.

Why do " factotum," " shallow water " and " worm," words used in Robert Greene's tirade, agree with the Earl of Oxford's names and office, and why should the Bolebec crest turn out to be a lion shaking a spear, although it must be admitted that this is not an uncommon crest ?

Then the age question. Why should twenty-five, thirty, forty and forty-eight exactly fit in with the Earl of Oxford's age at the time the plays were written ? It has been suggested that the author had a great interest in the Earl of Oxford. It would be a very great interest which caused him to make puns on Vere, Oxford, Trussel, Trentham, Bulbeck, and to

insert birthdays of all the daughters. Finally, it may be said that the whole of the incidents are merely the result of a too vivid imagination, looking for Oxonian allusions. In that case it must be perfectly possible to take any period—Victorian, if one likes—select someone who was about forty-eight at the time of a total eclipse, and then fit all the personal allusions in to suit that person and the topical ones to suit the times. If this can be done, there is clear proof that the points in question are illusions, and nothing else. If they are more than illusions, but only coincidences, then the question arises how many incidents does one accept as coincidences before coming to the conclusion that they are more than that? Discard the wildest of suggestions in this book: can the remainder only be coincidences? Is it a coincidence that a Trussell is a candle-holder, or that the Earl of Oxford was born on the conclusion of peace between England and Scotland? If they are still to be considered coincidences, how many of them would it be necessary to find to prove the authorship? If 150 won't do it, would 500 do it? Would any number do it? Would anything convince the reader, other than the discovery of a document signed by the Earl of Oxford and Will Shakespeare and witnessed by Ben Jonson and Lord Burghley, a document stating that the Earl of Oxford was the author of the plays?

The following plays are generally assumed to have been written between 1604, the year of the Earl of Oxford's death, and 1611: "Othello," "Measure for Measure," "Macbeth," "King Lear," "Antony and Cleopatra," "Coriolanus," "Cymbeline," "The Winter's Tale" and "The Tempest." Has the evidence put forward shown sufficiently conclusively that this is not the case, but that they were all written prior to 1604?

No plays are supposed to have been written at the

earliest before 1588. Does the evidence show that ten, or some fraction of ten, plays were written before that date?

The Earl of Oxford has come down to history as one of the best writers of comedy of his day. Are the plays written before 1588 the ones referred to?

These plays, with the exception of two, are not published till 1523, averagely forty-two years after they were written. In days when there was no Press, could such a thing happen without it being generally known that the plays were written by him and not by William Shakespeare of Stratford? Young courtiers of twenty would then be over sixty, and the possibility does not appear unreasonable.

Could remarks be made about Shakespeare which were intended to refer to the Earl of Oxford, by those who knew his identity, in the same way as one now talks of George Eliot or Anthony Hope? If so, and it does not appear an unreasonable possibility, then it would be easy to assume in later days that they were intended to refer to William Shakespeare of Stratford, and so the Stratfordian theory would gain ground.

There is still one more question that has been asked: Why assume that there is intended to be any double meaning in phrases in the play? This is assumed because, apart from any controversy as to the authorship, it always has been so assumed. "France making war on her heirs," Oberon's speech about the sea-maid, and many more point to the fact, and all the writer of this book has done is to look at them from an Oxonian point of view, and possibly increase the usually recognised number.

Believing that Shakespeare intended to convey double meanings, this book may well be concluded by

taking a leaf out of his book, or, rather, small portions of the leaves :

" What great ones do the less will prattle of,"
" Therefore I will be sudden and despatch "
" Forthwith a power of English,"
" In proof whereof there is my honour's pawn."

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